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A STUDY IN THE ORIGIN OF THE PAULINE
USE OF MYSTERION

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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CHAPTER I

MYSTERION IN PAUL: THE PROBLEM OF ORIGIN

Although the word *μυστήριον* appears infrequently in the New Testament, it looms large in Pauline thought. Outside of the Pauline Corpus¹ it occurs only seven times. Paul uses it twenty-one times.² More important, his use of the term indicates a fullness and richness of variegated meaning that makes it a most significant concept in his writings. Wilhelm Stählin notes that "this one word rings throughout in the Epistles to Colossae and Ephesus, sounding, as it were, the ground-tone on which the whole wealth of hymnal overtones is constructed."³ And yet the Pauline *μυστήριον* is variously understood and frequently misunderstood. No doubt this is due in part to the English word "mystery" often used to translate *μυστήριον*. In modern usage mystery connotes something obscure, enigmatic, or incomprehensible. But perhaps the confusion has resulted also from the various views

¹Although we are well aware of attempts to discredit Pauline authorship of certain writings on the basis of different shades and emphases of meaning of the term *μυστήριον* in those writings, for the purposes of this study we will assume that Paul was the author of the letters traditionally attributed to him, including those in which the word *μυστήριον* occurs.

²One of these, the occurrence in 1 Cor. 2:1, has the well attested textual variant *μαρτύριον*, which many scholars accept as the preferred reading.

³Wilhelm Stählin, The Mystery of God, translated by R. Birch Hoyle (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1964), p. 12. Cerfaux says that the word *μυστήριον* "characterizes the epistles of the captivity and dominates their vocabulary." Cf. L. Cerfaux, Christ in the Theology of St. Paul, translated by Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), p. 402.

concerning the source of Paul's use of $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$. Many scholars, notably those belonging to the religionsgeschichtliche school of thought, have held that Paul consciously borrowed the term from the mystery religions and consequently its content must be determined in the light of that background. Others have insisted that Paul appropriated $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$ from common Greek usage as the ordinary word for "secret" and thus any additional nuances of meaning must be attributed to Paul himself. Still others have suggested that Paul was influenced by the way $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$ was employed in Jewish apocalyptic literature and therefore his own use of the term must be understood in the light of Semitic thought. The purpose of our investigation is to try to determine the origin of Paul's use of the term $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$ with a view toward clarification of the concept of "mystery" in Pauline theology.

We will proceed as follows. First, we will examine the Hellenistic background of the term $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$. Then we will investigate the Semitic background of the term. And finally, after a brief consideration of $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$ in the New Testament outside of the Pauline Corpus, we will examine the term exegetically in each of the passages where it occurs in the writings of Paul, trying to determine the source of its use.⁴

⁴We are indebted particularly to the following major sources for data vital to our study: J. A. Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1909), pp. 234-240; G. Bornkamm, " $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$, $\mu\upsilon\acute{\epsilon}\omega$," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1967), IV, 802-828; Raymond E. Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XX (1958), 417-443; "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (I)," Biblica, XXXIX (April 1958), 426-448; "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (II)," Biblica, XL (January 1959), 70-87; and Joseph Coppens, "'Mystery' in the Theology of Saint Paul and its Parallels at Qumran," in Paul and Qumran, edited by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd., c.1968), pp. 132-158.

CHAPTER II

HELLENISTIC BACKGROUND OF MYSTERION

Before we consider *μυστήριον* as a cultic concept in the Hellenistic world, we want to take a brief look at the etymology of the term which "is itself a mystery."¹ Most scholars believe that *μυστήριον* is probably derived from *μύειν*, "to close the apertures whether of eyes or mouth."² Thus in the Scholia of Aristophanes' *Ranæ* we find the notation: *μυστήρια δὲ ἐκλήθη παρὰ τὸ τοὺς ἀκούοντας μύειν τὸ στόμα καὶ μηδενὶ ταῦτα ἐξηγεῖσθαι. μύειν δὲ ἐστὶ τὸ κλείειν τὸ στόμα.*³ Jane Harrison, on the other hand, holding that the most essential feature of the mysteries was not secrecy, but purification, and pointing to a passage in Clement of Alexandria (*Protrepticus* II, *μυστήρια . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ συμβεβηκότος περὶ τὸν Διονύσιον μύσους*), sees the real origin of *μυστήριον* in the *μύσος* done to Dionysus--*μυστήριον* meaning then the doing of what relates to a pollution, that is, a ceremony of

¹G. Bornkamm, "*μυστήριον, μύειν*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1967), IV, 803.

²J. A. Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Ephesians* (London: Macmillan and Company, Limited, 1909), p. 234, however, holds that although *μύειν* is sometimes used by transference also of shutting the mouth, the word "mouth" must always be expressly added to give this meaning.

³Bornkamm, IV, 803.

purification.⁴ Others derive $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$ from the pun which links it with "mouse hole" (Athenaeus III, 98d, $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \mu\upsilon\omega\nu\ \delta\iota\epsilon\kappa\delta\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\acute{\alpha}\lambda\epsilon\iota,\ \acute{\omicron}\tau\tau\epsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \mu\upsilon\varsigma\ \tau\eta\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon$).⁵ G. Bornkamm remarks that these and "other traditional derivations only demonstrate the uncertainty and are valueless."⁶ Nevertheless, one might conclude, though hesitatingly, that etymologically $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$ has to do with something on which silence must be kept.⁷

The usage of $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$, however, soon established it as a precise technical term with reference to the so-called mystery religions which existed as early as the seventh century B.C. and flourished particularly in the third and fourth centuries A.D. The oldest known occurrence of $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron$ ⁸ is found in a Fragment (14, 68) of Heraclitus (535-475 B.C.) where the term refers to the mysteries of Dionysus.⁹ Herodotus (2, 51) speaks of the

⁴Jane Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), p. 154. Yet she notes that Clement was formally quite incorrect.

⁵Athenaeus, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page, and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1927), I, 424.

⁶Bornkamm, IV, 803.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Karl Prüm, "Mysterion von Paulus bis Origenes," Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie, LXI (1937), 395, rightly notes the predominance of the plural ($\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron$) when denoting a pagan rite, in contrast to the singular ($\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$) which occurs most frequently in Paul.

⁹Walther Kranz, editor, Vorsokratische Denker (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1949), p. 78.

Samothracian $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\alpha$ ¹⁰ and also of the Egyptian $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\alpha$ (2, 171).¹¹ And Aristophanes ($\beta\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon\alpha\chi\omicron\iota$, 887) refers to the most famous $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\alpha$, those of Demeter at Eleusis.¹² Thus $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\alpha$ is used frequently for a particular assemblage of secret rites, regarded as a whole.¹³ The term is also sometimes used for the ritual acts themselves¹⁴ and then again for mystic implements and ornaments used in the ritual celebrations, such as those sacred objects carried to Eleusis in connection with the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries (Aristophanes, $\beta\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon\alpha\chi\omicron\iota$, 159).¹⁵

¹⁰Herodotus, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1931), I, 338.

¹¹Ibid., I, 485.

¹²Aristophanes, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1937), II, 376.

¹³Samuel Cheetham, The Mysteries Pagan and Christian (London: Macmillan and Company, 1897), p. 136.

¹⁴W. Dittenberger, editor, Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum (tertium Edita; Lipsiae: Apud S. Hirzelium, 1917), II, 369, 511. Louis Bouyer, Rite and Man, translated by M. Joseph Costelloe (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, c.1963), pp. 127-128, insists that the $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\alpha$ were not speculations or teachings about the mysteries, but were simply rites, and nothing more.

¹⁵Aristophanes, II, 310. Cf. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, revised by H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie (New edition; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940), II, 1156.

In contrast to other terms used for the mysteries-- τελετή or τελεταί (Herodotus, 2, 171;¹⁶ Pausanias, 10, 31, 11;¹⁷ Isocrates, 4, 28¹⁸) and ὄργια (Homeric Hymn to Demeter, 273, 476¹⁹), which do not denote any notion of secrecy, the word μυστήρια contains a definite secret element.²⁰ It is a particularly appropriate term for the mysteries which are described by C. A. Lobeck as sacred rites which took place, not in the sight of all or in the full light of day and at public altars, but either in the night, or within closed sanctuaries, or in remote and solitary places.²¹

J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan cite numerous examples where μυστήριον is used as a technical term in pagan religion to denote a "secret" known only to the initiated which they must not reveal. For instance, from the inscriptions we have OGIS 33, 54 (Pergamon, middle of the second century B.C.): *ῥεταζόμεθα δὲ ἀκολουθῶς τούτοις καὶ περὶ θυσίῳ καὶ πομπῳ καὶ μυστηρίων τῶν ἐπιτελουμένων πρὸ πόλεως αὐτῶι*

¹⁶Herodotus, I, 484.

¹⁷Pausanias, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1935), IV, 552.

¹⁸Isocrates, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1928), I, 134.

¹⁹Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns, and Homeric, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1936), pp. 308, 322.

²⁰Cheetham, p. 137, is guilty of an inaccurate over-simplification, however, when he says that "in the words μυστήρια, ὄργια, τελεταί we have the leading characteristics of the Mysteries--secrecy, emotion, and edification."

²¹C. A. Lobeck, Aglaophamus (Tomus Primus et Secundus; Regimontii Prussorum: Sumtibus Fratrum Borntraeger, 1829), p. 270.

ἐν τοῖς κδοήκουσι κειροῖς καὶ τόποις. In the sepulchral epigram Kaibel 588⁴ a priest is described as ἐκτελέσας μυστήρια πάντοτε σεμνῶς. From the papyri we find ἄρξαι λέγειν τὴν στήλην καὶ τὰ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ (P Leid W iii 42). And in an incantation to the Great Deity in P Lond 46¹¹⁰ the following occurs: ἐγὼ εἰμι Μουσῆς ὁ προφήτης σου ὃ παρ' ἑσέως τὰ μυστήρια σου τὰ συντελούμενα Ἰσραήλ.²² It is quite evident, then, that this technical religious use of the term μυστήριον was very common during the centuries in which the mystery cults played a significant role in the Graeco-Roman world.

From the time of the Renaissance to the present, these ancient mystery cults have engaged the interest of both classical scholars and theologians, so much so that the voluminousness of the material written on the subject has caused A. D. Nock to comment somewhat sarcastically, "'Savior-gods' and mysteries probably did not bulk so large in the life of the first century A.D. as in modern study."²³ And yet, that the mysteries were immensely popular and exerted widespread influence in the Graeco-Roman world is indicated indirectly by the vigor of Christian denunciations leveled against them, and directly by scattered fragments of mystery literature and the distribution

²²M. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Limited, 1952), p. 420.

²³A. D. Nock, Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background in Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation, edited by A. E. F. Rawlinson (New York: Longmans, Green and Company LTD, 1928), p. 81.

of mystery chapels and other archaeological remains.²⁴ Ironically enough, one of the probable reasons for that popularity, namely the secrecy and esoteric character of the cults, largely accounts for our notably fragmentary information concerning the mysteries.²⁵ Nevertheless, certain basic common characteristics of the mysteries can be delineated.

Central to the mystery religions were the secret cultic rites in which the individual participated of his own volition, and by which he was supposedly put into a closer relation with the deity honored. Among these rites were preliminary fastings, expiatory sacrifices, and lustrations; some sort of a ritual meal; showings and handlings of sacred objects; and dramatic representations of the cult-myth.²⁶ Those who wanted to participate in the celebration of the mysteries

²⁴Harold R. Willoughby, Pagan Regeneration (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1929), pp. 26, 27. However, A. H. Armstrong, "Mystery and Mysteries," The Downside Review, LXXX (July 1962), 218, believes that although the influence of the mystery cults was great from the late second century onwards, yet in the period of the Apostolic Church their influence was much more restricted.

²⁵This scantiness of literary remains of the mystery cults plus the lateness of the material, much of which dates from the second, third, and fourth centuries A.D., should make us cautious in describing with finality any given mystery cult at a given time, and particularly in making superficial comparisons between the mysteries and Apostolic Christianity. Cf. Henry C. Sheldon, The Mystery Religions and the New Testament (New York: The Abingdon Press, c.1918), pp. 14, 15; Charles A. A. Scott, Christianity According to St. Paul (Cambridge: The University Press, 1961), pp. 125, 126; and especially, Bruce M. Metzger, "Considerations of Methodology in the Study of the Mystery Religions and Early Christianity," Harvard Theological Review, XLVIII (January 1955), 6, 7.

²⁶Armstrong, LXXX, 214.

had to be initiated; the uninitiated were denied not only access to the sacred actions, but even knowledge of them.²⁷

The mysteries began essentially as vegetation and fertility cults, the Great Mother being the embodiment of the powers of nature, but at a very early stage certain dim hopes of an after-life came to be attached to these cults; thus the gods of growth were generally also the gods of the dead.²⁸ These were suffering deities whose experiences of conception and birth, sorrow and joy, death and life were enacted in the cultic drama.²⁹ In their personal destiny the gods bestowed the powers of life and as the devotees became incorporated into the deities--a union effected supremely by the sacramental actions such as sacred meals and weddings, fertility and birth rites, baptisms, investitures with sacred garb, rites of death and resurrection, or cultically symbolized journeys to Hades and heaven³⁰--the initiates

²⁷Bornkamm, IV, 804. He further notes that the initiatory ceremonies and the actual mystery celebrations are often hard to distinguish and that the term *μυστήρια* covers the whole celebration, including the initiatory rites.

²⁸Hugo Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery*, translated by Brian Battershaw (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 20. In an excellent treatment of the evolution of the mystery cults, Rahner finds only a "mystery atmosphere" prevailing in the first century A.D., a gravitation toward a solar pantheism in the second century, and the development of the "literary mysteries" in the third century (pp. 18-20).

²⁹Thus in *Herodotus* (2, 171), I, 484 we find with reference to Osiris: *ἐν δὲ τῇ Ἀίγυπτῳ ἐδόξατο τὰ θεῶν παθόντων αὐτοῦ νοκτοῦς πολεῦσιν, τὰ καλεῖσθαι μυστήρια Ἀίγυπτιοι.*

³⁰Bornkamm, IV, 805.

shared³¹ in their destiny³² and thus in the powers of life necessary for protection in this world and bliss in eternity. In this way the initiate obtained hope for the future.³³ However, the uninitiated ($\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\eta\varsigma \xi\epsilon\rho\omega\nu$), who had no part in the mysteries, could never look forward to a happy lot after death.³⁴

The distinction between initiates and non-initiates found expression not only in the ritual of the mystery celebrations but also in the vow of silence imposed on the devotees,³⁵ a feature perhaps implicit

³¹Bornkamm (IV, 805) suggests that "the $\pi\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\nu$ of devotees is the true experience which corresponds to the $\pi\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta$ of the deity." Cf. the famous passage in Synesius de Dione, 10, Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n.p., 1863), LXVI, 1. 1133, 1134, in which he says that Aristotle believed that the initiated $\text{οὐ μαθεῖν τι δεῖν, ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ δεσπεθῆναι σιλοῦντε γινόμενους ἐπὶ τῇ δαίμονι.}$

³²This is indicated by some formulae that have been preserved, perhaps the best known of which is found in Maternus Julius Firmicus, De Errore Profanorum Religionum, edited by Konrat Ziegler (Lipsiae: In Aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1907), p. 57: $\theta\alpha\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon \mu\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\tau\alpha\iota \tau\omicron\upsilon \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon \sigma\epsilon\sigma\omega\sigma\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\upsilon. \epsilon\sigma\tau\iota \gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho \eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu \epsilon\kappa \pi\acute{\omicron}\nu\omega\nu \sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\alpha$ (22, 1). Cf. also 18, 1: $\epsilon\kappa \tau\upsilon\eta\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\upsilon \beta\acute{\epsilon}\beta\epsilon\omega\kappa\alpha, \epsilon\kappa \kappa\upsilon\mu\beta\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\upsilon \pi\acute{\epsilon}\pi\omega\kappa\alpha, \gamma\acute{\epsilon}\theta\omicron\nu\alpha \mu\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma \text{Αττεως,}$ p. 43, and 2, 9: $\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\eta\kappa\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu \sigma\upsilon\gamma\chi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu.$ p. 7.

³³From a dirge in memory of an Athenian who had been initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, we have the following: $\text{ὁλβιος ὅστις ἰδὼν ἔκεῖνα κοίλῃν ἐῖσεν ὑπὸ χθόνα. οἷδεν μὲν βίοτου τελευτὰν οἷδεν δὲ σκοσσοτον ἀεχάν}$ -- Fragment 137 from The Odes of Pindar, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1937), pp. 592, 594. Cf. also Isocrates (4, 28) I, 134.

³⁴So indicates a benediction in The Homeric Hymn to Demeter (480-482), in Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns, and Homerica, p. 322, 323.

³⁵Bornkamm, IV, 806. Cheetham, p. 44, on the other hand, maintaining that the Eleusinian rites were comparatively open, holds that "it is even uncertain whether the address of the hierophant contained any injunction of secrecy" and that "the herald's proclamation for silence almost certainly refers rather to the awful silence to be

in the etymology of the word *μυστήριον*. The pledge to absolute secrecy was almost without exception conscientiously observed, "being enforced both within the brotherhood and from the outside with a rigor that amazes the inquisitive modern mind."³⁶

The reverential attitude of the ancients toward the mysteries³⁷ may be illustrated by numerous examples. Herodotus (2, 51), in referring to a sacred tale underlying the cultic actions and revealed in the Samothracian mysteries, suddenly stopped his account, apparently because of the impropriety of revealing more.³⁸ Again, speaking of "a rite which the Egyptians call the mysteries," he goes on to say:

I could speak more exactly of these matters, for I know the truth, but I will hold my peace (*εὐστου καίσθω*); nor will I say anything (*εὐστου καίσθω*) concerning that rite of Demeter which the Greeks call Thesmophoria, except that part of it which I am not forbidden to mention.³⁹

And Lucius Apuleius of Madaura, who detailed an extensive account of his own initiation into the Isis mysteries, continued his account of what was said and done in the most secret and sacred place of the temple (XI, 23): "Verily I would tell thee if it were lawful for

observed during the celebration than to any reserve practised by the worshippers." But cf. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter (476-482), in Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns, and Homerica, p. 322.

³⁶Willoughby, p. 24.

³⁷The *μυστήρια* were considered *ῥέκρυτα* which meant that they were not to be disclosed. Cf. Scholia in Sophocles' Oedipus Coloneus, 1051, lines 22-24, in Scholia in Sophoclis Tragoedias Vetera, edited by Petrus N. Papageorgius (Lipsiae: In Aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1888), p. 445.

³⁸Herodotus, I, 339.

³⁹Ibid., I, 484. Bornkamm, IV, 807, holds that the fact that the silence formulae are a literary convention in Herodotus' writings shows how old and fixed the injunctions of silence were.

me to tell, thou wouldest know if it were convenient for thee to hear; but both thy ears and my tongue should incur the like pain of rash curiosity."⁴⁰ When he himself was on trial for magical practices he insisted that he could not be forced to reveal to the uninitiated what he had received under the vow of secrecy.⁴¹ In taking this stand Lucius relied on accepted Roman legal procedure to prosecute anyone guilty of profaning the mysteries.⁴² Such profanation might involve either a parody of the sacred rites, of which Alcibiades was allegedly guilty during a night-time spree with some of his friends,⁴³ or an intrusion into the rites without initiation.⁴⁴ The vow of silence obviously did not extend to all the elements of the mysteries;⁴⁵ it concerned less the general significance of the mysteries,⁴⁶ which was not only known by non-initiates, but was a strong attraction for

⁴⁰Lucius Apuleius, The Golden Ass, translated by W. Addington (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.), p. 293.

⁴¹Willoughby, p. 25.

⁴²Thus in Isocrates (16, 6), III, 178 we read: εἰδότες, δὲ τὴν πόλιν τῶν μὲν περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ μάλιστα ἂν ὀρεσθῆεν εἰς τὰς εἰς τὰ μυστήρια φάνοισι' εἰς δὲ μὲν ἀνδρῶν.

⁴³Plutarch, Alcibiades 19, in Plutarch's Lives, translated by John Langhorne and William Langhorne (New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.) I, 380-384.

⁴⁴Titus Livius, Historiarum, ex recensione A. Drakenborchii (Oxonii: J. Parker et G. B. Whittaker, 1825), Tomus III, 14.

⁴⁵S. Argus, The Mystery-Religions and Christianity (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), p. 78.

⁴⁶Sheldon, p. 10.

them, than its ceremonial detail.⁴⁷ The real reason for the injunction of silence is probably not found in the fact that the cults were originally linked with specific sanctuaries and territories and that the gods were national deities who had to be protected against enemy attack--for the injunction remained even when the original national boundaries were crossed--but is to be sought in the special sanctity of the actions which established communion with the deity.⁴⁸

Before we turn to other usages of the term *μυστήριον* in the Greek world, we should briefly consider the relationship between the mystery cults, whose basic characteristics we have attempted to describe, and Pauline terminology and thought.⁴⁹ Differences of opinion are indeed great, perhaps not surprisingly, owing to the fragmentary and sometimes ambiguous evidence available. Some hold that the amount of influence that the mystery cults exerted on primitive Christianity and particularly Pauline theology is rather considerable. R. Reitzenstein, beginning with the presupposition that Paul had concerned

⁴⁷Cf. Diodorus of Sicily (V, 49, 5), in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1939), III, 234: *καὶ τὰ μὲν κατὰ μέεος τῆς τελευτῆς ἐν ἀπορενέτοις τελούμενα νόμοις πλεδδίδοται τοῖς μυσθεῖσι.*

⁴⁸Bornkamm, IV, 808. Cf. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter (479), in Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns, and Homerica, p. 322: *μέγα γὰρ το θεῶν σέβας ἔσχατος ἀνθρώπων.* Bornkamm further substantiates this as the actual reason by pointing to the common use of *σέμνος* in connection with the mystery terms, e.g., *σέμνος...τέλει* in Sophocles, Oedipus Coloneus (1050), in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1932), I, 246.

⁴⁹For a succinct historical survey of the study of the relation between the mystery religions and early Christianity, cf. Rahner, pp. 6-15. Also Metzger, XLVIII, 1, 2.

himself with the literary documents of the mystery cults,⁵⁰ believes that he used terms, including *μυστηριεσιν*, which derived from the cults, and with the terms, ideas--ideas which even after modification still show that the mystery cults exerted an important influence on Paul.⁵¹ Likewise, Alfred Loisy contends that Paul, having become familiar with the mystery cults from discussions with initiates at Tarsus, as well as from a study of their literature both before and after his conversion,⁵² transformed Jesus into "a saviour-god, after the manner of an Osiris, an Attis, a Mithra,"⁵³ and His passion "into a myth of salvation, the Christ of history," having "no place at all in his religion."⁵⁴ Furthermore, the apostle's interpretation of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, claims Loisy, came from the mysteries,⁵⁵ so that Christianity, "in its worship as in its belief . . . is a

⁵⁰R. Reitzenstein, Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen (Dritte Auflage; Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1927), pp. 209, 210. Cf. Vittorio D. Macchiolo, From Orpheus to Paul (New York: Henry Holt and Company, c.1930), p. 204, who goes even further, stating that "there is no reason for rejecting" the view that Paul "had been initiated."

⁵¹Reitzenstein, pp. 218-220.

⁵²Alfred Loisy, "The Christian Mystery," The Hibbert Journal, X (1911-1912), 58. He believes that Paul's "conversion itself, in consequence of a celestial vision, and the lofty attitude he afterwards assumes, bears witness that he was imbued with the spirit of the mysteries." Cf. ibid., X, 59.

⁵³Ibid., X, 51.

⁵⁴Ibid., X, 61.

⁵⁵Ibid., X, 52-57.

religion of mystery."⁵⁶ So, too, Percy Gardner holds that "to say that, with Paul, the Christian Church arose as a mystical sect, combined of Jewish and heathen elements . . . may be regarded as a rough approximation to the truth,"⁵⁷ the best points in the mysteries being "absorbed by Christianity."⁵⁸ And Kirsopp Lake, calling Paul "the eclectic Gentile" who "saw every reason for equating the Lord with the Redeemer-God of the Mystery Religions,"⁵⁹ concludes that "Christianity has not borrowed from the Mystery Religions, because it was always, at least in Europe, a Mystery Religion itself."⁶⁰

On the other hand, some take a more critical view of Paul's alleged dependence on the mystery cults. Chester C. McCown, for example, holding that Paul was not unfamiliar with the mystery cults from his youth at Tarsus and his work among the heathen, agrees that Paul was clearly borrowing from the religions of his environment, "using illustration after illustration . . . from the language of the cults," but in order "to prove that faith in Christ guarantees all that any mystery cult could promise, and very much more."⁶¹

⁵⁶Ibid., X, 57.

⁵⁷Percy Gardner, The Religious Experience of Saint Paul (New York: B. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), p. 80.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁹Kirsopp Lake, The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul (London: Rivingtons, 1911), p. 45.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 215. Cf. also Rudolph Steiner, Christianity as Mystical Fact and the Mysteries (New York: Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 1947), pp. 115-118, 182.

⁶¹Chester C. McCown, "The Sources of Pauline Mysticism," in Contemporary Thinking About Paul, an Anthology, compiled by Thomas S. Kepler

And Walter W. Hyde concludes that whatever influence was exerted by the mystery cults on Pauline thought happened indirectly through the general atmosphere diffused by them, which as a group "formed a sort of praeparatio evangelica."⁶² So, too, G. H. C. MacGregor feels that although Paul was too hostile to paganism to have been influenced by the rites of any particular cult, yet he uses much of the language and some of the ideas of his Hellenistic environment, and in being all things to all men "the native texture of Paul's thought may have taken on a coloration alien to itself. . . ."⁶³ Even more cautious is John W. Moran who believes that although Paul, in adapting himself to the capacities and intellectual background of his hearers, was willing to use mystery terminology familiar to his readers, he would not compromise on ideas.⁶⁴

Finally, there are numerous scholars who maintain Paul's independence from the mystery cults with regard both to concepts and terminology. Already in the late nineteenth century Gustav Anrich affirmed that a

(New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), pp. 118-121. McCowan calls this a "clear case of 'stimulus diffusion,' in which a new content, related but different, was put into another system." Cf. ibid., p. 121.

⁶²Walter W. Hyde, Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, c.1946), p. 68. Cf. John A. Faulkner, "Did Mystery Religions Influence Apostolic Christianity?," The Methodist Quarterly Review, LXXIII (July 1924), 400, 401. Also Frederick C. Grant, editor, Hellenistic Religions (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, c.1953), p. xxxviii.

⁶³G. H. C. MacGregor, Eucharistic Origins (London: James Clarke and Company, Limited, 1928), pp. 205, 206. Cf. also Carl H. Kraeling, "Reitzenstein and the Mystery Religions," The Lutheran Church Quarterly, I (April 1928), 176.

⁶⁴John W. Moran, "St. Paul and the Mystery Religions," The American Ecclesiastical Review, CXXII (June 1950), 423, 424. Cf. also T. R.

conscious adoption of forms and institutions of the mystery religions can scarcely have taken place.⁶⁵ Two decades later, Carl Clemen emphatically stated that the idea that New Testament conceptions have been borrowed from the mystery cults is simply not the case.⁶⁶

Terms that are common both to Paul and the mysteries, he insisted, were only a matter of forms of expression; "sie beweisen aber sich für einen Einfluss der Mysterienreligionen auf die paulinische Theologie noch gar nichts."⁶⁷ More recently Hugo Rahner has said, "Theories which postulate a genetic relationship or one of historical causality between the Hellenistic mystery cults and the essentials of Christian belief can no longer be taken seriously."⁶⁸ Similarly, A. E. J. Rawlinson has asserted that

the idea that the development of Christianity in Apostolic times was in any appreciable respect influenced either by the "theology" or by the ceremonial rites of any contemporary pagan "mystery cult" must be regarded as erroneous.⁶⁹

Glover, Paul of Tarsus (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925), p. 115; Kenneth E. Lee, A Study in Romans (London: SPCK, 1962), p. 16; and H. Chadwick, "All Things to All Men," New Testament Studies, I (1954-1955), 272.

⁶⁵Gustav Anrich, Das antike Mysterienwesen in seinem Einfluss auf das Christentum (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1894), p. 235.

⁶⁶Carl Clemen, Primitive Christianity and its Non-Jewish Sources, translated by Robert G. Nisbet (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912), p. 372.

⁶⁷Carl Clemen, Der Einfluss der Mysterienreligionen auf das älteste Christentum (Gießen: Verlag von Alfred Topelmann, 1913), p. 29.

⁶⁸Rahner, p. 9.

⁶⁹A. E. J. Rawlinson, The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ (London: Longmans, Green and Company, LTD, 1926), p. 270.

Such widely divergent viewpoints, Bruce M. Metzger feels, are due, at least in part, to differences in methodology in dealing with the evidence available.⁷⁰ Among the methodological considerations he and others suggest need to be taken into account in estimating the amount of influence of the mystery cults on Pauline language and thought are the following. In the first place, it is absurd to believe that Paul's opponents, who fiercely attacked him for what they considered to be liberal tendencies in regard to Gentile observance of the Mosaic law, raised no objections to his supposedly wholesale acceptance of mystery ideas.⁷¹ Then, too, it must not be overlooked that Paul's "prevailing set of mind was rabbinically oriented, and that his newly-found Christian faith ran in molds previously formed at the feet of Gamaliel."⁷² A. D. Nock speaks to this point when he says of Paul:

He saw life around in terms of the Septuagint and of Jewish apologetics, of the sermons which he heard at Tarsus as a boy. . . . Many curious imaginings have flitted across the minds of men as they have sought to reconstruct the past; but there can have been few more curious than the pictures of Paul listening attentively to Stoic lectures at Tarsus or making enquiries about Mithraism and later enriching Christianity from these sources.⁷³

⁷⁰Metzger, XLVIII, 4.

⁷¹Ibid., XLVIII, 7. Cf. also H. G. Marsh, The Origin and Significance of the New Testament Baptism (Manchester: The Manchester University Press, 1941), p. 139.

⁷²Metzger, XLVIII, 7. Cf. W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (London: SPCK, 1948), p. 1, who although not denying all Hellenistic influence on Paul, seeks to show that "Paul belonged to the mainstream of first-century Judaism, and that elements in his thought, which are often labelled as Hellenistic, might well be derived from Judaism."

⁷³A. D. Nock, "The Vocabulary of the New Testament," Journal of Biblical Literature, LII (1933), 139. Cf. Albert Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, translated by William Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt and Company, c.1931), p. 28, who scoffs at Reitzenstein's picture of Paul studying the mystery language and ideas to prepare for his missionary work.

Indeed, Paul may have been little affected by the mystery atmosphere in Tarsus, since he belonged to a Jewish family which no doubt fostered a consciousness of difference and separateness from the heathen environment.⁷⁴

At any rate, Paul's own writings give evidence of the fact that the Septuagint exercised a great influence on his choice and use of words.⁷⁵ "He is writing the Greek of a man who has the Septuagint in his blood."⁷⁶ By contrast, Paul shows only the slightest acquaintance with pagan Greek literature.⁷⁷ This is not to say that there are no echoes of the terminology of the mystery cults in the Pauline Corpus. But this is not so surprising for one, who as a missionary was singularly sensitive to what was in the minds of those to whom he wrote, as is the fact that he does not appear to be more keenly interested in these popular cults.⁷⁸ The fact is that "the evidence for such an employment of a mystery terminology in the Pauline Epistles is very slight."⁷⁹

⁷⁴Scott, pp. 3, 4.

⁷⁵A. D. Nock, Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background (New York: Harper and Row, c.1964), p. xiii.

⁷⁶Nock, Journal of Biblical Literature, LII, 138. Cf. also Henry P. Hamann, Justification by Faith in Modern Theology (St. Louis: School for Graduate Studies, Concordia Seminary, 1957), pp. 34, 35.

⁷⁷A. D. Nock, St. Paul (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 235.

⁷⁸Scott, pp. 4, 5.

⁷⁹John G. Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion (New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1921), p. 272.

Secondly, although it cannot be denied that parallels between the mystery cults and Pauline thought and language do exist,⁸⁰ in evaluating their significance several factors need to be kept in mind. For one thing some alleged parallels must be discounted because they are the result of the "amalgamation of quite heterogeneous elements drawn from various sources."⁸¹ Albert Schweitzer rightly points this out when he says:

those who are engaged in making these comparisons are rather apt to give the Mystery-religions a greater definiteness and articulation of thought than they really possess, and do not always give sufficient prominence to the distinction between their own hypothetical reconstruction and the medley of statements on which it is based. . . . They manufacture out of the various fragments of information a kind of universal Mystery-religion which never actually existed, least of all in Paul's day.⁸²

Then, too, even when parallels are actual and not imaginary, a distinction must be made between genetic derivation and the kind that arises when a process of assimilation and adaptation has set in, particularly for a specific tactical purpose.⁸³ And one must discriminate between genealogical and merely analogical parallels, that

⁸⁰For parallels suggested by various scholars see Edwyn R. Bevan, "Mystery Religions and Christianity," in Contemporary Thinking About Paul, An Anthology, compiled by Thomas S. Kepler (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950), p. 42; Shirley Jackson Case, Experience with the Supernatural in Early Christian Times (New York: The Century Company, c.1929), pp. 260-262; Rawlinson, p. 283; Sheldon, pp. 94-98; and especially, Rahner, pp. 37-45.

⁸¹Metzger, XLVIII, 8.

⁸²Albert Schweitzer, Paul and His Interpreters, translated by William Montgomery (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), pp. 192, 193.

⁸³Rahner, p. 11.

is, similarities that have arisen from more or less equal religious experience and those that are due to actual borrowing.⁸⁴ Resemblance or agreement does not establish causality.⁸⁵ Finally, even when parallels are genealogical it must be remembered that it is not only possible, but in some cases probable, that Christianity influenced the mystery cults rather than vice-versa.⁸⁶

A third consideration in rightly assessing the relation of the mystery cults to Paul's language and ideas is that due attention must be given to their fundamental and far-reaching differences, among which are the following: (1) For Paul the Christian mystery is not mythical but historical. In contrast to the gods of the mystery cults who are merely nebulous figures in an imaginary past,⁸⁷ "the Divine Being whom the Christians worshipped as Lord was known as a real Person on earth."⁸⁸ As Rahner puts it,

The God of the Christian mystery is not a thing fashioned out of the thoughts and longings, however sublime, of pious and searching Hellenistic souls . . . rather is he the God . . . who can only be found in the ways taught in the Gospel. . . .⁸⁹

⁸⁴Metzger, XLVIII, 9.

⁸⁵Cf. Franz Cumont, The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, c.1911), p. xviii.

⁸⁶Metzger, XLVIII, 10, 11. Cf. also Cheetham, p. 77.

⁸⁷Bevan, p. 44. Plutarch believes it necessary to warn the priestess Clea against believing that "any of these tales (concerning Isis and Osiris) actually happened in the manner in which they are related."

⁸⁸Metzger, XLVIII, 12. Cf. Hans J. Schoeps, Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish History, translated by Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1961), p. 21; Rawlinson, p. 283; Armstrong, LXXX, 219, 220; and Davies, pp. 90, 91.

⁸⁹Rahner, p. 32.

(2) The Christian mystery, built upon the strictest monotheism, stands in contrast to the obvious syncretistic bent of the mystery cults where "the god of one mystery fades into the god of another."⁹⁰

And whereas Paul insists that Christians must abandon all would-be saviors for the one Savior, Jesus Christ, none of the mystery cults demands an exclusive religious loyalty on the part of its adherents.⁹¹

(3) The God of the Christian mystery is a personal spiritual Being who, even in His Incarnation, remains superior to the world; on the other hand, cultic deities, who are primarily powers of vegetable and animal life, give to the mystery religions a definite naturalistic basis and pantheistic tendencies.⁹²

(4) Whereas Christ loves mankind so much that He comes into the world and voluntarily undergoes death for man's sake, the mystery gods never die of choice or out of self-giving love.⁹³ (5) In contrast to the triumphant note that even on the Cross Christ exercised His kingly rule, the devotees of mystery cults only mourn in sympathy with gods who suffer something imposed upon them.⁹⁴ "In the Christian commemoration the only element of mourning is the thought that men have betrayed and murdered Jesus.

⁹⁰Charles Gore, The Holy Spirit and the Church (London: John Murry, 1924), p. 88. Cf. also Sheldon, p. 70.

⁹¹Cf. Machen, p. 9; Willoughby, pp. 33-35; and George La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome During the First Centuries of the Empire," Harvard Theological Review, XX (October 1927), 327.

⁹²Cf. Alfred Wikenhauser, Pauline Mysticism, translated by Joseph Cunningham (Freiburg: Herder, c.1960), p. 166. Also Sheldon, pp. 66, 98.

⁹³Schweitzer, Paul and His Interpreters, p. 193. Cf. also Bevan, p. 44.

⁹⁴Metzger, LXVIII, 17.

His death is itself triumph."⁹⁵ (6) Whereas in the Christian perspective history consists of a series of unique events from Creation to Judgment and the final realization of God's Kingdom, the most significant event of which is the once-for-all death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for the mystery cults the world-process, interpreted on the basis of the recurrent death and reanimation of the cultic deities symbolizing the cycle of nature, is an eternal vain recurrence, a circular movement leading nowhere.⁹⁶ (7) While the salvation proclaimed by Christ is a redemption from sin and guilt, that promised by the mystery cults is a salvation from fate essentially conceived in terms of the natural order.⁹⁷ Even Reitzenstein admits,

Dass diese Erlösung . . . zunächst eine Vergebung der Sünden ist, scheint mir das Neue. Der furchtbare Ernst der Predigt von der Schuld und Versöhnung fehlt, soweit ich sehe, dem Hellenismus.⁹⁸

(8) For the Christian, salvation means incorporation, not just into Christ, but through Him, into a community of all Christians, the Body of Christ, which extends throughout history and has the absolute

⁹⁵A. D. Nock, "A Note on the Resurrection," in Essays on the Trinity and Incarnation, edited by A. E. J. Rawlinson (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, LTD, 1928), p. 48.

⁹⁶Cf. Bevan, p. 47, and Metzger, LXVIII, 19, 20. Schweitzer, Paul and His Interpreters, pp. 227, 228, insists that although the mystery cults speak of death, judgment, and life after death, yet they are not eschatological in the Pauline sense of the word, for they are concerned only with the "subjective future of individuals, in connexion with no imminent catastrophe affecting all mankind. . . ."

⁹⁷Rahner, p. 35. Sheldon, p. 99, remarks with regard to the mystery cults: "Anyone who can discover in their bizarre and variegated mythology an equivalent for the Pauline doctrine of redemption must be gifted with peculiar eyesight."

⁹⁸R. Reitzenstein, Poimandres (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1904), p. 180.

assurance of ultimate victory.⁹⁹ On the other hand, the mystery cults, "born of the individualism of the age,"¹⁰⁰ offer deliverance to the solitary as a purely "individual escape to a higher plane of being."¹⁰¹ (9) In Pauline theology the ethical obligations of Christians are clear and inescapable and they are inextricably related to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that there is no upward mounting in Christianity, but "only the descent of God and the outpouring of divine grace which brings about our transformation in the love of Christ."¹⁰² By contrast, not only do the mystery cults make few, if any, moral demands,¹⁰³ but their piety "is at

⁹⁹Cf. Armstrong, LXXX, 220 and Scott, p. 9. Also A. Oepke, "Βάπτειν, βαπτίζω, βαπτισμός, βάπτισμα, βάπτισμα-τις," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1964), I, 541. Here Oepke summarizes well this contrast along with several others to which we have already referred when he says: "On the one side, we have a timeless and naturalistic individualism of regeneration, on the other a spiritual historical relationship, a new creation of the totality, eschatologically understood."

¹⁰⁰Davies, p. 90.

¹⁰¹Bevan, p. 47.

¹⁰²Rahner, p. 34.

¹⁰³Scott, p. 199, notes further that the god's character and conduct are not of any concern to his worshippers. Cf. also Faulkner, LXXIII, 87; Gore, pp. 89, 90; Armstrong, LXXX, 221; and Case, p. 255. Wikenhauser, p. 197, rightly points out, however, that although attacked for lack of ethical emphasis and immoral practices by Roman poets and Christian apologists, the mystery communities cannot simply be written off as "gatherings of scoundrels." There are individual exceptions, the moral concern varies from cult to cult, and later, in the third and fourth centuries, there is an indication of attempts to read moral values into some cultic myths. La Piana, XX, 334, 335, argues that these cults never made real progress in an ethical direction, however; for if they had, they would soon have felt the need of disciplinary

best only the tragic earth-bound effort towards moral, and often only ritual, purification: it is the effort of the soul to mount upward by its own power."¹⁰⁴ (10) Whereas apostolic teaching which forms the content of faith looms large in the Pauline writings, in the mystery cults there is no compact body of doctrine, but rather a considerable emphasis on emotional impressions and sensations derived from scenic and spectacular rites and myths which can be interpreted, within very wide limits, as the worshippers wish.¹⁰⁵ (11) Whereas the Christian sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are considered to be primarily dona data, that is, blessings bestowed on those who by nature are unfit to participate in Christ's Kingdom, the rites of the mystery cults convey their benefits ex opere operato by creating an immortal element in the devotee with a view to the after-life, but with no effective change of the moral self in the present life.¹⁰⁶ (12) Finally, unlike

laws and traditions and generally accepted standards of conduct, and consequently, the need of a comprehensive organization--which never happened.

¹⁰⁴Rahner, p. 34.

¹⁰⁵Cf. Aristotle's statement that those being initiated are not to learn something but to go through an experience and to be put into a state of mind--Synesius de Dione, 10, Patrologiae: Patrum Graecorum, edited by J. P. Migne (Paris: n.p., 1863), LXVI, 1. 1133, 1134. How effectively initiation scenes could stir the imagination may be seen by Apuleius' description of initiation into the mysteries of Isis. Cf. Apuleius, p. 294.

¹⁰⁶Metzger, XLVIII, p. 13. Rawlinson, p. 280, notes that "the actual evidence, in the period of the New Testament, of a sacramentalism akin to that of Christianity in connexion with any of the 'mystery cults' is exceedingly scanty." And most modern scholars point out that the antecedents of these Christian sacraments are to be found in Jewish soil. Cf. Metzger, XLVIII, 15, 16 and MacGregor, p. 32.

the Christian mystery, an "open secret" disclosed freely to the whole world, mysteries of the cults are carefully guarded under a shroud of secrecy from all but the initiated.¹⁰⁷

From the preceding methodological considerations, we would wholeheartedly agree with Metzger when he concludes:

the evidence requires that the investigator maintain a high degree of caution in evaluating the relation between the Mysteries and early Christianity and . . . if a judgment may be hazarded, the central doctrines and rites of the primitive Church appear to lack genetic continuity with those of antecedent and contemporary pagan cults.¹⁰⁸

But what about Pauline terminology? Did Paul find in the mystery cults a ready-made technical religious vocabulary which he borrowed in order to present the Gospel message more effectively? Efforts to support such claims have not been convincing.¹⁰⁹ The fact is that Paul and the other New Testament writers failed to use many Greek words that were quite familiar in the context of the thought and practice of the mystery cults and which would have been rather appropriate.

We . . . note that *μυηθείς* occurs only in Phil. 4:12, and then in a very common metaphorical sense, and not with reference to baptism. *μύστης*, *μυστικός*, *μυσταγωγός* do not appear. . . *τελώ* in the sense of "I initiate" and its compounds, *τέλος* in the same sense, *τελετή*, *ὑπερτελής* (like *ἡμύνητος*), *ἑεροφάντης*, *ὄρα* are missing. So are *κατέχεσθαι*, *κατοχος*, *ἐνθεος*, *ἐνθεουσιάζω* and its correlatives, which might so well have been used to describe possession by the Spirit. For purification we find *καθαισμός* (used of a rite only in Lucian, *De Asino*, 22), and not the religious terms *καθαίεμος*, *καθαίεσις*. *ὑγνεία* is found

¹⁰⁷Cf. Sheldon, pp. 64, 65.

¹⁰⁸Metzger, XLVIII, p. 20.

¹⁰⁹Cf. Davies, p. 91, and Machen, p. 273. Also Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background*, p. xiii, who asserts that such an attempt "breaks down completely."

only in its abstract sense as a moral quality, *ἐσεεύς* is never applied to Christian ministers; it describes the status which all the chosen are to have in the Kingdom. *ἐσεόν* and *υἱός* are never used of their places of meeting; and Christians are never called *ἐσεοί*. *λόγια*, which has Septuagint precedent, is common, but *χριστός* and its cognate are absent, and *μαρτεύοντι* is found only of the pagan ventriloquist in Acts 16:16. *θεολόγος* and its compounds are missing.
 ...¹¹⁰

Nock continues with this observation:

these are not recondite words; they belonged to the everyday language of religion and the normal stock of metaphors. It almost seems that there was a deliberate avoidance of them as having associations which were deprecated. Certainly there is no indication of an appropriation of pagan religious terms.¹¹¹

Not only that, but the adaptation by the Church of anything like mystery terminology and even its metaphorical application before the fourth century is noticeably slow and slight, even though there can have been few, if any, Greek-speaking inhabitants of cities in the Near East who were without some awareness of the fact that there were ceremonies called *μυστήρια* and *τελεταί* and who were acquainted with some of its vocabulary.¹¹²

¹¹⁰Nock, Journal of Biblical Literature, LII, 133, 134.

¹¹¹Ibid., LII, 134. Cf. Christine Mohrmann, "Linguistic Problems in the Early Christian Church," Vigiliae Christianae, XI (January 1957), 23-25, who traces to the LXX both the principle of rejection of certain technical pagan religious terms in favor of words that lay outside that pagan sphere of religious thought, and the principle of Lehnübersetzung by which a completely new thought complex is attached to an existing word on the strength of certain, more or less limited, points of contact. Perhaps the latter principle was at work in Paul's use of *μυστήριον*.

¹¹²Nock, Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background, p. 135. Among the Post-Apostolic Fathers, *μυστήριον* is used rarely, appearing three times in Ignatius and once in the Didache. Cf. Bornkamm, IV, 824-827.

Thus in considering the origin of Paul's use of *μυστήριον*, we should be extremely cautious, on the basis of such linguistic evidence, in looking for that source in the mystery cults. Furthermore, we must not allow ourselves to ignore Paul's own Jewish and rabbinical orientation. It could well be that the Old Testament evidence makes it superfluous to seek for the explanation of Paul's use of *μυστήριον* in the Hellenistic mystery religions.¹¹³

Before we examine the Semitic background of *μυστήριον*, however, we want to look briefly at other usages of the term in the Greek world. First, we note the use of *μυστήριον* and other mystery terminology in philosophy where it is employed metaphorically. Plato uses the imagery of initiation in Symposium 210a-212c, when Diotima, speaking as a hierophant, differentiates between preparatory initiation into the mysteries of love and the final revelation of beauty itself (τὰ τέλη καὶ ἐποπτεῖα).¹¹⁴ And in Theaetetus 156a, Socrates, while trying to explain a philosophical doctrine of Protagoras and others of a particular school to Theaetetus, ironically speaks of his task in these words: μέλλω σοι τὰ μυστήρια λέγειν.¹¹⁵ The significance of this passage for the history of *μυστήριον* is that here τὰ μυστήρια

¹¹³H. A. A. Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery-Religions (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), p. 198. Cf. also Sheldon, pp. 76, 77, and James S. Stewart, A Man In Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d., p. 73.

¹¹⁴Plato, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1939), V, 200-208.

¹¹⁵Plato, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1942), II, 55.

are not ceremonial rites but obscure, secret doctrines whose hidden wisdom can be understood only by those capable of knowledge.¹¹⁶ As in Phaedrus 249c (τοῖς δὲ δὴ τοιούτοις ἀνὴρ ὑπομνήμασιν ὁρθῶς χεώμενος, τελέους δὲ τελετὰς τελούμενος, τέλεος ὄντως μόνος γίγνεται),¹¹⁷ so also here the gradual ascent of philosophical knowledge to the full vision is the genuine initiation. The metaphorical sense of mystery terminology is also apparent in Gorgias 497c, when Socrates says facetiously: εὐδαίμων εἶ, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, ὅτε τὰ μεγάλα μνησθῆναι πρὶν τὰ σμικρὰ.¹¹⁸--meaning that one cannot hope to know great things without first learning the truth about little things. And in Meno 76e, μυστήριον is used figuratively in the phrase, ἀπιέναι πρὸ τῶν μυστηρίων¹¹⁹--that is, to leave before one has understood the main point.¹²⁰

Although Plato is still averse to mystery terminology, in later philosophy the relation to the mysteries is considerably closer,¹²¹

¹¹⁶Bornkamm, IV, 808. Cf. Brook F. Westcott, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1906), p. 182, who suggests that already here "the idea of secrecy is subordinate to that of special discovery or possession."

¹¹⁷Plato, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1917), I, 482.

¹¹⁸Plato, V, 430.

¹¹⁹Plato, IV, 286.

¹²⁰Aristotle divides his philosophy into "exoteric" and "esoteric" and the Stoics regard discourses about the gods as τελεταί. Cf. Harry A. Wolfson, Philo (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, c.1947), I, 24, 25.

¹²¹Bornkamm, IV, 809.

as is evidenced, for example in Philo. While denouncing the licentiousness of the Greek mysteries (De Specialibus Legibus III, 7, 40),¹²² describing them as *τεεθεείων καὶ βωμολογιῶν* (De Specialibus Legibus I, 59, 319),¹²³ and objecting to them because they reserve their benefits for a few instead of all (De Specialibus Legibus I, 59, 320),¹²⁴ Philo nevertheless freely uses the terminology of these very mystery cults.¹²⁵ He describes the covenant into which the Israelites entered with God as an act by which Moses initiated them into the mysteries (*μυστηριῶν*) (De Virtutibus 33, 178).¹²⁶ In Eleusinian fashion he distinguishes between *τὰ μικρὰ μυστήρια* and *τὰ μεγάλα μυστήρια* (De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini

¹²²Philo, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page, and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1958), VII, 500.

¹²³Ibid., VII, 284.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵E. R. Goodenough, By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 7, believes that Philo identifies "the religion of Scripture with the religion of the mysteries," transforming Judaism into "the greatest, the only true, Mystery." Cf. also his article, "Wolfson's Philo," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVII (1948), 91, where he contends that Philo takes "the concepts of the mysteries over as living forces and ideals into his Judaism, but . . . unconsciously." On the other hand, G. C. Richards, reviewing By Light, Light in The Journal of Theological Studies, XXXVIII (October 1937), 415, insists that Goodenough takes Philo's mystery language too literally and asserts that Philo adopts such terminology deliberately for proselytizing purposes. Cf. also Davies, pp. 93-98, and especially Wolfson, I, 44-49, who argues rather convincingly that Philo "uses terms borrowed from the mysteries in the same way as he uses terms borrowed from popular religion and mythology, all of them because they were part of common speech," and that "he explains in what special sense he compares the covenant with God to an initiation into mysteries and in what special sense he enjoins silence with regard to what he calls the mysteries of God."

¹²⁶Philo, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1954), VIII, 272.

16, 62).¹²⁷ He uses the technical term *ἐρεοφάντης* of God (De Somniis I, 26, 164),¹²⁸ Moses (De Specialibus Legibus IV, 34, 177;¹²⁹ De Virtutibus 11, 75; 32, 174),¹³⁰ and Jeremiah (De Cherubim 14, 49).¹³¹ And he asserts that the person who has been initiated into the mysteries of Moses is not to divulge them to the uninitiated (De Cherubim 14, 48),¹³² but he is to conceal them in silence (*ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ*) (De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini 15, 60).¹³³

The purpose of the knowledge of this mystagogic philosophy is to distinguish between real truth and its symbolic appearance by allegorical interpretation of the mysteries.¹³⁴ The term *μυστήρια* is now not cultic but ontological, denoting that which not only should not be revealed, but also that which by nature cannot be revealed.¹³⁵ Bornkamm summarizes well this significant change in the understanding of *μυστήρια* when the vocabulary of the mystery cults was adopted by philosophy:

¹²⁷Philo, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1950), II, 140.

¹²⁸Philo, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1958), V, 382.

¹²⁹Philo, VIII, 116.

¹³⁰Ibid., VIII, 206, 270.

¹³¹Philo, in The Loeb Classical Library, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page, and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1950), II, 36.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid., II, 138.

¹³⁴Bornkamm, IV, 809.

¹³⁵Ibid.

They were divested of their sacramental character and became secret teachings. In the theology of the philosophical mysteries the cults, strictly speaking, are no longer true mysteries; they conceal mysteries. The term implies, not the cultic event of encounter with deity, but the divine ground of being. Interest has shifted from the earthly contingency of the divine to the divine transcendence of the cosmos.¹³⁶

Mystery vocabulary is also richly represented in the texts of magic literature. *μυστήριον* is used for a magical action, the formula which effects the magic, magically potent mystery writing, and other means employed in magic, such as magic ointment, material from a scarab, and sacred animals.¹³⁷ Apparently there is no change of meaning of the use of the term in the magic texts from that in the mystery cults, except that magic involves individual practice without formal cultic connection.¹³⁸

The metaphorical use of *μυστήριον*, however, can once more clearly be seen in secular contexts. Yet, even here, the influence of religious concepts is not altogether lacking. So, for example, when Mnesimachus in a comedy speaks of sleep as being the small mysteries of death,¹³⁹ the cultic concept is the basis, for the metaphor carries an obvious allusion to Eleusinian ritual.¹⁴⁰ But gradually figurative usage prepares the way for secular use where the religious content has disappeared. So we find in the Menander

¹³⁶Ibid., IV, 810.

¹³⁷Ibid. For other examples, cf. Moulton and Milligan, p. 420.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Nock, Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background, p. 120.

¹⁴⁰Bornkamm, IV, 810, 811. He also notes that the original religious sense together with the more secular usage may both be seen in the proper name, *Μύσσης*.

Fragment 695: *μυστήριόν σου μή κατέπτης τῷ φίλῳ κοῦ μή φοβηθῇς αὐτὸν ἔχθρὸν γινόμενον.*¹⁴¹

Here *μυστήριον* is simply a "secret," with no religious overtones whatever. The term is also common in medical writings, for example, with reference to a prescription.¹⁴² Cicero (*Ad Atticum*, 4, 17, 1) speaks of letters that are so full of secrets (*tantum habent mysteriorum*) that an amanuensis as a rule cannot even be trusted, for fear of something leaking out.¹⁴³ In another place (*Ad Atticum*, 6, 4), he introduces an important point written in Greek with the statement: *illud praeterea μυστικώτερον ad te scribam.*¹⁴⁴ And as we shall see, the LXX also uses *μυστήριον* in the secular sense of a "secret."

It is noteworthy, however, that this secular use of *μυστήριον* is a later phase in the development of the term. And even then, although the religious content disappears to a large extent in popular usage, yet the religious use remains dominant over-all.

Its history moves from the cultic and religious to the general and profane, not *vice versa*. The fact that examples of secular usage are on the whole rare, and are repeatedly shown by the context to be figurative, demonstrates that the term was never wholly secularised.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹Menander, in *The Loeb Classical Library*, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1921), p. 522.

¹⁴²Bornkamm, IV, 811.

¹⁴³Cicero, in *The Loeb Classical Library*, edited by E. Capps, T. E. Page and W. H. D. Rouse (London: William Heinemann, 1912), I, 318.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., I, 464.

¹⁴⁵Bornkamm, IV, 811.

Finally, we note the use of *μουσῆς* in Gnostic literature where we find that Gnosticism, like mystical philosophy, fosters a process of intermingling and reinterpreting the mystery cults.¹⁴⁶ The Gnostics reduce the oriental and Greek myths to the "myth of the heavenly primal man who has fallen into the chaotic cosmos, and will be redeemed and brought to his original destiny."¹⁴⁷ When a person listens in silence to the concealed mystery he becomes pneumatic¹⁴⁸ and through knowledge of that mystery is united with the primal man.¹⁴⁹ The ineffable mysteries of the Spirit are the resurrection of the perfect man and his entrance into heaven by which he is saved and deified.¹⁵⁰ These mysteries are both concealed and revealed¹⁵¹—concealed from all who because of their purely earthly origin cannot hear the message from the other world, but revealed to the perfect Gnostics who have a heavenly origin. The one who discloses these mysteries is Jesus¹⁵² who promises:

Bearing seals, I shall descend;
Through ages whole I'll sweep,

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies, translated by J. H. MacMahon, in the Ante-Nicene Christian Library, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868), VI, 140.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., VI, 140, 141.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., VI, 143, 144.

¹⁵¹Ibid., VI, 135.

¹⁵²Cf. G. R. S. Mead, editor, Pistis Sophia (Revised edition; London: John M. Watkins, 1963), pp. 12-15, where Jesus Himself is called *μουσῆς*. Significantly though, as Mead notes, He is never called the Christ. Cf. p. xi.

All mysteries I'll unravel,
 And forms of Gods I'll show;
 And secrets of the saintly path,
 Styled "Gnosis," I'll impart.¹⁵³

The framework in which the mysteries are concealed and revealed includes heaven, the true sphere of the mysteries,¹⁵⁴ earth,¹⁵⁵ and the spheres of the archontes.¹⁵⁶ Within this broad framework significance may be attached to the cultic action. However, whereas in the mystery cults myth is a by-product of the cultus, for the Gnostics cultus is a by-product of myth.¹⁵⁷ And, finally, it is not without import that the concept of the mysteries in Gnosticism has overtones of magic, such as we also noted in the mystery cults themselves. Thus *μυστηριον* may refer to the secret means of salvation filled with heavenly power such as a cultic dance,¹⁵⁸ a magical preparation,¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³Hippolytus, VI, 153.

¹⁵⁴Mark Lidzbarski, translator, Ginza (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1925), p. 381.

¹⁵⁵The primal man comprehends the whole cosmos in himself. Cf. Walter Scott, translator, Hermetica (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 122.

¹⁵⁶Cf. Mead, pp. 15-17, 32, where the archontes prostrate themselves when the redeemed come. For the heavenly redeemer has revealed the mysteries of these evil forces and thereby wrested them from them. Cf. Lidzbarski, p. 131.

¹⁵⁷Borrkamm, IV, 812.

¹⁵⁸Acta Johannis, in Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha, editor M. Bonnet (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1959), p. 198.

¹⁵⁹Lidzbarski, pp. 228, 232.

baptisms,¹⁶⁰ sacred books,¹⁶¹ and conjurations¹⁶²--mysteries that must not be betrayed lest they lose their magical power.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰Mead, pp. 247-249.

¹⁶¹Lidzbarski, pp. 65, 142, 150.

¹⁶²Cf. Corpus Hermeticum 16, 2 in Scott, p. 264, where we see that the magical formula must not be translated and thus revealed to the Greeks or else their empty, bombastic rhetoric will reduce it to impotence.

¹⁶³Bornkamm, IV, 813.

CHAPTER III

SEMITIC BACKGROUND OF MYSTERION

In our quest for the source of Paul's use of *μυστήριον* we dare not confine ourselves to the Hellenistic world of ideas and words.¹ We have already suggested that Paul's own linguistic usage which shows relatively little technical mystery terminology, as well as his thoroughly Jewish training and outlook, beckon us to consider the Semitic background for his use of *μυστήριον*. The scope of our investigation includes the LXX, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran literature, and the writings of Rabbinic Judaism.

The term *μυστήριον* occurs twenty-one times in the LXX,² usually translating *ṣṭr*, a Persian loan-word.³ Before we consider these passages, however, we want to look at the Hebrew word *סֵדֶר*, a term which, although not translated in the LXX by *μυστήριον*.⁴

¹James S. Stewart, A Man In Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p. 73, in fact states that "the exegesis which turns to Hellenistic sources for the genesis of Paul's regulative ideas, without having in the first instance attempted at least to trace the origin of these ideas in the Old Testament, is entirely unscientific."

²Edwin Hatch and Henry Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1897), II, 937. Cognates are rare: *μύστις* appears in Wisd. 12:6; *μύστις* in Wisd. 8:4; and *μυστικῶς* in 3 Macc. 3:10.

³F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 1112.

⁴Cf. G. Bornkamm, "*μυστήριον, μυσῶ*," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,

is quite significant in the historical development of the Semitic concept of mystery.⁵ The basic meaning of *ṭḥ* appears to be "council" or "assembly," sometimes referring to an earthly assembly (Jer. 6:11; 15:17; Ps. 64:3; Gen. 49:6; Ps. 111:1; Ezek. 13:9), but also at times to the heavenly council (Job 15:8; Ps. 89:8; Jer. 23:18,22).⁶ The decisions reached in this assembly of Yahweh were made known to the people by the prophet who was introduced by vision into the sessions of the *ṭḥ* (Isaiah 6 and Amos 3:7).⁷ Since anyone admitted to such an assembly, whether earthly or heavenly, would share a special intimacy with the others present, *ṭḥ* also conveys the notion of intimate friendship (Ps. 25:14; Prov. 3:32; Job 29:4).⁸ Finally,

c.1967), IV, 814, n. 113. A possible exception is Sir. 3:19 where the Sinaiticus suppletor has *μυστηριον*. Other Hexapla translations have *μυστηριον* for *ṭḥ* as follows: Symmachus in Prov. 11:13; Theodotion in Job 15:8 and Prov. 20:19; and Theodotion and Quinta in Ps. 24 (25):14.

⁵Raymond E. Brown, "The Pre-Christian Semitic Concept of Mystery," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XX (1958), 417.

⁶Brown, Driver, and Briggs, p. 691. Robinson holds that this heavenly *ṭḥ* was regarded very realistically by Jeremiah and his contemporaries for whom the sky was a solid firmament holding Yahweh's temple-court in which He dwelt and to which His counselors, "sons of God" (argelic attendants), came at His call. Cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Council of Yahweh," The Journal of Theological Studies, XLV (1944), 151, 152.

⁷Brown, XX, 420. An interesting parallel has been drawn suggesting that just as the prophet who had been admitted into the intimate council of the Lord had a special acquaintance with His will, purpose, and plan, so Paul believed himself to stand in a peculiar relationship to Christ who informed him, directly or through the Holy Spirit, concerning his message and activity in the ministry of the Gospel. Cf. Jacob M. Myers and Edwin D. Freed, "Is Paul Also Among the Prophets?," Interpretation, XX (January 1966), 48, 49.

⁸Ibid., XX, 421.

Τῆς is sometimes used for the secret decision rendered at such a council,⁹ and thus, in the case of a heavenly assembly, for heavenly secrets or mysteries. We shall see examples of this latter usage in the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Qumran literature and hopefully this will provide some insight into the Semitic concept of *μυστήριον*.

We now turn to the term *μυστήριον* itself as it appears in the LXX, looking first at the apocryphal, then the canonical, usage. Eight times *μυστήριον* is used in a purely secular sense for secrets which must not be divulged. Tob. 12:7,11 speaks of *μυστήριον βασιλέως*, the political confidences of the king. Likewise, in Judith 2:2 τὸ *μυστήριον τῆς Βουλῆς* refers to the plan of campaign that Nebuchadnezzar communicates only to his council. And in 2 Macc. 13:21 τὰ *μυστήρια* are military secrets which a Jewish traitor betrays to the enemy. Finally, Sir. 22:22 and 27:16,17,21 use the term with reference to secrets between friends. If these secrets are revealed to others the friendship is destroyed. From these references it is obvious that not in every instance does *μυστήριον* have religious connotations in the LXX.

Nevertheless, at times the term does have religious significance. In Sir. 3:19 (Sinaiticus Suppletor) we are told that God reveals (ἀποκαλύπτει) His secrets (*μυστήρια*) to the

⁹Ibid. For Τῆς in the sense of counsel in general cf. Prov. 15:22 and Ps. 83:4. Τῆς as a human secret appears in Prov. 11:13; 25:9; and Sir. 8:17.

humble.¹⁰ The context does not indicate what these secrets are, but it does advise against investigating and searching out what is hidden (*κευπτά*). For the secrets of God lie beyond human knowledge.¹¹ Therefore, God must reveal them. Elsewhere wisdom personified is an agent of God in revealing these secrets (*κευπτά* in Sir. 4:18 and *ἀπόκρυφα* in Sir. 14:21). When these synonyms of *μυστήριον* are considered in Sirach, several significant facets of the heavenly secrets emerge. First, the mysteries of God may include natural phenomena such as the sun, moon, stars, clouds, snow, rain, and dew--all of which are marvels of God's creation (Sirach 43). Secondly, mysteries may be applied to human actions, particularly evil actions done in secrecy which God knows (Sir. 17:15-21; 23:18-20; 39:19) and shall reveal (Sir. 1:30). Finally, knowledge of the mysteries of God seemingly may be acquired by studying the written tradition (the Law, Wisdom, and Prophets) and the oral tradition (Sir. 39:1-3); yet it is God who must give the understanding (Sir. 39:6-8).¹²

The other occurrences of *μυστήριον* in the Apocrypha are found in The Wisdom of Solomon, a book which probably was originally written in Greek by an Alexandrian Jew about the middle of the first

¹⁰Bornkamm, IV, 113, remarks that here "a mystical understanding is obviously presupposed."

¹¹Cf. Sir. 11:4 where the context indicates that the works of God that are hidden (*κευπτά*) from men include the vicissitudes of life and the workings of divine providence.

¹²Brown, XX, 424, 425.

century B.C.¹³ Whether it reflects a profound grasp of Greek philosophy or merely a popular use of its terms is debatable.¹⁴ At any rate, it is noteworthy that it "bears the imprint of its Hellenistic milieu."¹⁵

In Wisd. 2:22 we read that the wicked οὐκ ἔγνωσαν μυστήρια θεοῦ. The context describes how the ungodly, unaware of man's eternal destiny in creation and his eternal reward for holiness of life, believe that the life of the righteous ends with death. This seemingly indicates that God's mysteries here refer to His plans for the righteous in the life to come.¹⁶ The term μυστήρια is also used with reference to the nature and origin of wisdom in Wisd. 6:22: τί δέ ἐστιν σοφία καὶ πῶς ἐγένετο ἀπαγγεῖλω καὶ οὐκ ἀποκρυψῶ ὑμῖν μυστήρια. Since no distinction is made here between the initiates and the uninitiated, some understand this passage as an obvious jibe at the pagan mystery religions, whose secret rites were only for the initiates and were not to be divulged.¹⁷ We agree, however, with Harry A.

¹³Cf. Samuel Holmes, The Wisdom of Solomon, in The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, edited by R. H. Charles (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), I, 520, 521, 524, 525.

¹⁴Brown, XX, 425, n. 38. Cf. Holmes, I, 531-533.

¹⁵Brown, XX, 425.

¹⁶Holmes, I, 538, n. on Wisd. 2:22, suggests that the mysteries of God refer to the fact that suffering is not necessarily punishment, but often a test of goodness which will be rewarded after death by immortality.

¹⁷Cf. Holmes, I, 545, n. on Wisd. 6:22. Wilfred L. Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles (Cambridge: The University Press, 1939), p. 227, holds that the mysteries here do not resemble any particular mystery cult, but the esoteric teachings which these cults were supposed to symbolize.

Wolfson who interprets this reference to *μυστήρια* not in opposition to mystery cults, but rather to that wisdom which in Greek philosophy was to be imparted in secret only to a select few.¹⁸

Actually, the use of the term *μυστήρια* in this passage is not surprising since the emanation of wisdom from God (Wisd. 7:25; Sir. 24:3-6) was unobserved by man, and thus it could well be called secret without any reference to a specific opponent.¹⁹ Furthermore, the fact that the description of the origin of wisdom (Sir. 24:1-6) is revealed to the heavenly assembly²⁰ accounts for its being a mystery.

Other instances of *μυστήριον* and its cognates in The Wisdom of Solomon would more clearly indicate, however, a familiarity with the technical language of the mystery religions. Raymond E. Brown distinguishes two different usages: the application of mystery cult terminology to pagan rituals of past Israelite history, and the application of such terminology to describe events contemporary with the writer or to express the religious thought of the writer.²¹ As an example of the former usage, Wisd. 12:5 uses the term in describing the initiates of Canaanite orgiastic rites.²² With

¹⁸Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, c.1947) I, 24-25. For the development of the meaning of *μυστήρια* as philosophical mysteries rather than cultic mysteries, cf. *Supra*, pp. 28-32.

¹⁹Brown, XX, 426.

²⁰The context seems to indicate that the LXX *ἐκκλησία* may well render an original *τῶν*.

²¹Brown, XX, 426.

²²Cf. Nu. 25:3-5 which says that Israel was initiated (*ἐτελέσθη*) into the sacrificial rites of Baal of Peor.

reference to the latter usage, Wisd. 14:15 may be cited: "For a father worn with untimely grief, making an image of the child too quickly taken away, now honored him as a god who then was a corpse, and delivered to those that were under him mysteries and solemn rites" (μυστήρια καὶ τελετάς). A little later the writer speaks of rites (τελετάς) of child-killing and hidden mysteries (κεύθια μυστήρια) and frantic revels (κῶμοι) of strange rituals (Wisd. 14:23). Seemingly the writer has in mind some debased form of mystery religion. Concerning the author's own religious thought, he calls wisdom, which he regards as God's agent in teaching him mysteries (κευπτά) (Wisd. 7:21, 22), μύστις . . . τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπιστήμῳς (Wisd. 8:4). Here he uses the technical mystery cult term for a female initiate.

We do find terminology then in this last book of the Apocrypha which seemingly indicates some familiarity with the language of the mystery cults. However, it is "only a familiarity which would be the common possession of Alexandrians in the period just before Christ."²³ It is clear that the μυστήρια of The Wisdom of Solomon "are linked neither with sacramental rites nor with the Gnostic redemption myth."²⁴ And certainly there is no evidence whatever in the Apocrypha as a whole of a wholesale borrowing of terminology from the mystery religions nor of an incorporation of any of their ideas.

²³Brown, XX, 427.

²⁴Bornkamm, IV, 814.

In the canonical Old Testament the only book where the LXX translates the original by *μυστήριον* is in the Aramaic section of Daniel (2:18,19,27,28,29,30, and twice in verse 47).²⁵ The Aramaic word so translated is ܡܝܨܬܪܝܢ. Here we find the familiar episode of how the sorcerers and enchanters under the threat of death fail to reveal King Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning. When Daniel is apprised of the precarious situation he asks for an audience with the king, and then tells his three companions: *ζητησατε παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ ὑψίστου περὶ τοῦ μυστηρίου τούτου* (2:18). Then we are told: *τότε τῷ Δανιηλ ἐν ὁράματι ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ νυκτὶ τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ βασιλέως ἐξέφάνθη εὐσημῶς* (2:19). It is God who reveals both the dream, which consists of a series of symbols (the figure of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay, and a stone--2:31-35), and its content, the coming kingdom which is sovereign and eternal (2:36-45). Thus Daniel blesses the God who controls history, to whom belongs wisdom, who gives wisdom to the wise, and who *ἀνακαλύπτων τὰ βαθέα καὶ σκοτεινά* (2:20-22).²⁶ No human being can reveal this mystery (2:27), but *ἔστι θεὸς ἐν οὐρανῷ ἀνακαλύπτων μυστήρια δὲ*

²⁵It also appears in Theodotion's translation of Dan. 4:9. For occasional examples of the use of *μυστήριον* in other Greek translations of the Old Testament, cf. Armitage J. Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909), p. 235. Also Edwin Hatch, Essays in Biblical Greek (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1889), p. 57.

²⁶The word the LXX here translates *σκοτεινά* is ܡܝܨܬܪܝܢ -- the only place in Daniel 2 where "secret" is not rendered by ܡܝܨܬܪܝܢ.

ἐδήλωσε τῷ Βασιλεῖ Ναβουχοδνόσορ
 ὃ δὲ δέει γενέσθαι ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν
 ἡμερῶν (2:28).²⁷ Daniel even insists that the mystery was

revealed to him not because of any special wisdom on his part but for the purpose of making known the interpretation to the king (2:30).

The use of *μυστήριον* in Daniel then would seem to indicate that it is an eschatological mystery. It has to do with future events predetermined by God Himself.²⁸ And it is God alone who reveals the mystery and its real meaning.²⁹ In fact, Dan. 2:47 suggests that it is God's power to disclose mysteries that sets Him apart from, and above, all pagan gods. "These mysteries therefore are ultimate events, delayed by God from all eternity, to which He holds the key, and which His Spirit alone is able to disclose in advance."³⁰

It is also noteworthy that in Daniel there appears to be a conjunction of the sapiential and eschatological traditions. Daniel gives Nebuchadnezzar's dream an eschatological interpretation but he

²⁷Cf. also 2:29: καὶ ὁ ἀνακαλύπτων μυστήρια ἐδήλωσέ σοι ὃ δὲ δέει γενέσθαι.

²⁸While Bornkamm, IV, 814, 815, holds that the eschatological sense of *μυστήριον* appears here for the first time, Brown, XX, 423, claims that although this may be true of the term itself, yet this is "only a development of the more ancient concept of the prophet's introduction into the heavenly assembly. . . ." Cf. also Kathryn Sullivan, "The Mystery Revealed to Paul--Eph. 3:1-13," *The Bible Today*, I (February 1963), 250, who suggests that here the words of Amos 3:7 are fulfilled and the secrets of the heavenly council are brought to men.

²⁹Theodotion's translation of Dan. 4:9 indicates that the disclosure and interpretation of the mystery is also reserved for those in whom the Spirit of God dwells.

³⁰M. Bouttier, "Mystery," in *A Companion to the Bible*, edited by J.-J. Von Allmen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 276.

begins his disclosure in the style of the Jewish sage in Dan. 2:20, and in the next verse God's eschatological and sapiental activities are juxtaposed.³¹ M. Bogdasavich puts it this way:

By the time the Book of Daniel was written, it was seen that time and history, too, are only another dimension encompassed and transcended by the hidden mysterion in the mind of the Lord of history . . . now the Wisdom writers see history as a series of new creations, continual eruptions of the transcendent God into the here and now. But they are eruptions with a purpose and a plan. The books of Baruch and Daniel especially eschatologize the Wisdom idea, showing that the σοφία θεοῦ has shaped human destiny and is bearing man toward something new.³²

In a similar vein Louis Bouyer remarks concerning the transition from wisdom to the apocalypse in Daniel:

Daniel is presented to us as a wise Jew. . . . it is he alone who is able to solve the riddles against the proud wisdom of this latter (the court of the king) comes to stumble. . . . he does this only through an inspiration of the Most High. It is He alone, indeed, who holds in His hand the kairoi, that is, the key to the decisive events of history, not only because He alone knew them beforehand but because it is He who determines them as King of Ages. And He reveals their mystery to whom He wills . . . not through any wisdom which His elect would possess as their own, but by His sole grace.³³

Bouyer goes on to say that here we are at "the exact source of the mystery of St. Paul as it is to appear in the First Epistle to the Corinthians."³⁴ This judgment we will evaluate when we study Paul's use of μυστήριον in 1 Corinthians.

³¹M. Bogdasavich, "The Idea of Pleroma in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians," The Downside Review, LXXXIII (April 1965), 124.

³²Ibid., LXXXIII, 124-127.

³³Louis Bouyer, Rite and Man, translated by M. Joseph Costelloe (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, c.1963), p. 143.

³⁴Ibid.

It would seem, then, that the use of *μυστήριον* to translate סֵּתֶר in Daniel was not influenced by the mystery religions. In fact the sparse use of *μυστήριον* throughout the LXX might indicate that the translators purposely avoided the word because of the alien religious connotations which the term had in accordance with its origin.³⁵ It may well be that we have here what Mohrmann calls the principle of "rejection," in which "words were deliberately chosen which lay outside the pagan sphere of religious thought."³⁶ Furthermore, in their limited use of *μυστήριον* the LXX translators perhaps employ the process of "calque" or "Lehnübersetzung," by which a totally new thought complex is attached to an existing word on the strength of certain limited points of contact.³⁷ This new thought complex takes shape as *μυστήριον* becomes definitely associated with the development of apocalyptic in later Judaism.³⁸

³⁵Cf. Robinson, p. 235. Also Bornkamm, IV, 814. In contrast to Robinson, p. 234, who holds that *μυστήριον* starting with a technical meaning in pagan religion, passes through a neutral phase in which the original metaphor was no longer felt, and finally, is adopted as a technical term of Christianity, Bornkamm, IV, 814, cautions that "only with reservations . . . can one speak of the transition of the religious word to general profane use or of an uninhibited new religious application."

³⁶Christine Mohrmann, "Linguistic Problems in the Early Christian Church," Vigiliae Christianae, XI (January 1957), 23.

³⁷Ibid., XI, 24. Mohrmann, XI, 25, concludes that "early Christian Greek finds a point of departure in the language of the LXX not only as an 'arsenal' of utilizable linguistic material, but also as a methodical example of linguistic adaptation and renewal."

³⁸Bornkamm, IV, 815, states that "The disclosure of divine secrets is the true theme of later Jewish apocalyptic."

To trace further this apocalyptic background of *μυστήριον* we now turn to the Pseudepigrapha,³⁹ specifically Enoch, 2 Baruch, and 4 Ezra.⁴⁰ In Enoch, where the term mystery appears most frequently, we find several different kinds of mysteries⁴¹ which may conveniently be categorized as evil mysteries, cosmic mysteries, and mysteries of God's will and human actions.⁴² Evil mysteries form a key part of the story of how evil angels lusted after women, came to earth, married them, and begat giants, with the result that much violence and lawlessness ensued (Enoch 6-7). The good angels then appeal to God: "Thou seest what Azazel hath done, who hath taught all unrighteousness on earth and revealed the eternal secrets which were (preserved) in heaven, which men were striving to learn" (En. 9:6,7).⁴³ The context indicates that "these mysteries" through which "women and men work

³⁹Robinson, p. 236, remarks that later Jewish Apocryphal literature provides "an important link between the usage of the Greek O.T. and the usage of the N.T."

⁴⁰References to these books are from R. H. Charles' edition of The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), 2 vols., except where otherwise indicated.

⁴¹Throughout Enoch mysteries are viewed as all-inclusive heavenly ultimate realities which lie behind and form the basis of world realities. Cf. Bornkamm, IV, 815.

⁴²Brown, XX, 428-433.

⁴³Brown, translates this passage, "He (the evil angel) revealed the eternal secrets which were being done in heaven." This text, together with En. 16:3 where God reproaches the fallen angels, "You have been in heaven, but (all) the mysteries had not yet been revealed to you, and you knew worthless ones, and these in the hardness of your hearts you have made known to the women . . ." Brown holds, suggest some sort of belief that evil mysteries were enacted in heaven before the angels came to earth and revealed them to humans and that God played a role in bringing about these evil mysteries.

much evil on earth" (En. 16:3) include charms and enchantments; cutting of roots and knowledge of plants; the art of making offensive and defensive weapons and of using metals; ornaments, cosmetics and costly gems--all materials used in the evil practices of magic, idolatry, violence, and seduction (Enoch 7 and 8).

The significance of the cosmic mysteries seems to lie in the role they play in divine providence. Such natural phenomena as the function of the moon, the division of the stars, winds, thunder, lightning, rain, hail, and snow (En. 60:11-22) are arranged and fulfilled "according to the commandment of the Lord of Spirits" (En. 41:6). The luminaries give "light to the righteous and darkness to the sinners in the name of the Lord" (En. 41:8). Later Enoch is informed by the angel who is explaining the heavenly mysteries that the names of the stars have parabolic meaning: "These are the names of the holy who dwell on the earth and believe in the name of the Lord of Spirits for ever and ever" (En. 43:4). And in En. 80:7 we are told that the mystery of the order of the luminaries is not revealed to sinners, with the result that they make them their gods. Finally, the mysteries of the mountains of metals--iron, copper, silver, gold, soft metal, and lead--are significant for the role they play in the realization of the Messianic kingdom. Enoch is told: "All these things which those hast seen shall serve the dominion of His Anointed that he may be potent and mighty on the earth" (En. 52:4).⁴⁴

⁴⁴Yet their role is strictly instrumental: "And they shall become powerless before his feet. . . . And all these things shall be destroyed from the surface of the earth, when the Elect One shall appear before the face of the Lord of Spirits" (En. 52:6,9). Here an eschatological flavor is evident.

Most often mysteries in Enoch, however, refer to God's will as it affects mankind and to man's actions under God's judgment--and here the mysteries have a strong eschatological bent. God's being and rule are unsearchable. The evil angels say of the Lord of Spirits: "And splendid in every secret thing is Thy power from generation to generation. . . . Deep are all Thy secrets and innumerable, and Thy righteousness is beyond reckoning" (En. 63:3). Human actions, too, are called mysteries,⁴⁵ whether good deeds (En. 38:3;⁴⁶ 49:2) or evil (En. 68:2; 83:7).⁴⁷

Since these actions stand under divine judgment it is not surprising that God's judgment itself is called a mystery.⁴⁸ In En. 41:1 Enoch says: "And after that I saw all the secrets of the heavens, and how the kingdom is divided, and how the actions of men are weighed in the balance." Even more explicit is Enoch's statement:

I know a mystery and have read the heavenly tablets . . . that all goodness and joy and glory are prepared for them, and written down for the spirits of those who have died in righteousness. . . . Woe to you, ye sinners, when ye have died. . . . Know ye, that their souls will be made to descend into Sheol and they shall be wretched in their great tribulation (En. 103:2-7).

⁴⁵According to Brown, XX, 432, since the term mystery frequently refers to God's judgment, when even man's hidden thoughts shall be revealed (cf. Sir. 1:30), it is not unnatural that human actions should be called mysteries.

⁴⁶Charles, II, 209, on the other hand, takes "The secrets of the righteous" to be the secret blessings of the righteous which, though still hidden, shall be revealed at the final judgment.

⁴⁷The secret human actions of En. 49:4 and 61:9 perhaps refer to human deeds period--good and bad.

⁴⁸In En. 89:1 a divine temporal judgment, the Flood, is called a mystery.

And in En. 68:5 Michael tells Raphael concerning the evil angels:
 "Therefore all that is hidden"⁴⁹ shall come upon them for ever and
 ever. . . . they have received their judgment for ever and ever."

In addition, the term mystery also applies to the Son of Man who
 was "chosen and hidden before Him, before the creation of the world"
 (En. 48:6)⁵⁰ and who shall be revealed on judgment day (En. 62:1).
 "And the Elect One shall in those days sit on My throne, and his
 mouth shall pour forth all the secrets of wisdom and counsel" (En.
 51:3). En. 62:2,13 adds:

And the Lord of Spirits seated him (the Elect One) on the throne
 of His glory, and the spirit of righteousness was poured out
 upon him, and the word of his mouth slays all the sinners.
 . . . And the righteous and elect shall be saved on that day.
 . . .⁵¹

Finally, Enoch 69 tells of how an angel asked Michael to show him
 "the hidden name" so that he could put it in the oath and consequently
 the evil angels who revealed secrets to mankind would tremble before
 that name. Thereupon, "the name of the Son of Man" was revealed
 to the good angels (En. 69:26). And in the following verse we are
 told:

And he sat on the throne of his glory, and the sum of judgment
 was given unto the Son of Man, and he caused the sinners to pass
 away and be destroyed from off the face of the earth. . . .

⁴⁹A later Ethiopic MS, has "the hidden judgment."

⁵⁰Cf. also En. 62:7.

⁵¹Cf. also En. 49:2,3, which states that the Elect One, described
 as "mighty in all the secrets of righteousness," shall "judge the
 secret things."

We now turn our attention briefly to the appearance of mystery in 2 Baruch.⁵² Baruch, praying to God, says: "Thou alone knowest the duration of the generations, and Thou revealest not Thy mysteries to many" (2 Bar. 48:3). The context seems to indicate cosmic mysteries: seasons, fire, wind, the heavens, darkness.⁵³ Yet here, too, as in Enoch, there seems to be a hint of eschatological import: "O my Lord, Thou summonest the advent of the times, and they stand before Thee; Thou causest the power of the ages to pass away, and they do not resist Thee" (2 Bar. 48:2). The eschatological thrust of the mysteries becomes even more apparent when in writing to the Israelites in the Babylonian captivity Baruch comforts them by saying:

I prayed for mercy from the Most High, and I said: "How long will these things endure for us? And will these evils come upon us always?" And the Mighty One did according to the multitude of His mercies . . . and He showed me visions that I should not again endure anguish, and He made known to me the mystery⁵⁴ of the times. And the advent of the hours He showed me (2 Bar. 81:2-4).

A similar thought appears in 2 Bar. 85:8-10 although the term mystery does not occur there:

⁵²Charles, II, 470, dates 2 Baruch (the Syriac version) between 50 and 90 A.D., making it contemporaneous with the New Testament writings.

⁵³3 Baruch (Greek version), which according to Charles, II, 529, 530, dates from the first part of the second century A.D. and shows some signs of Christian redaction, develops the cosmic mysteries at length. An angel promises to show Baruch "the mysteries of God" (3 Bar. 1:8) and then proceeds to take him on a tour of the heavens where he points out the measurements of the heavenly plains (ch. 2), the chariot of the sun (chs. 6-8) and that of the moon (ch. 9), and other physical phenomenon. Interspersed are descriptions of "spiritual" mysteries: the builders of the tower of Babel (ch. 3), the evil dragon (chs. 4 and 5), and the tree that led Adam astray (ch. 4).

⁵⁴Other MSS. read "mysteries."

the Most High . . . hath shown to us that which is to be, and has not concealed from us what will befall in the end. Before therefore judgment exact its own . . . let us prepare our soul. . . . For the youth of the world is past . . . and the advent of the times is very short.

In 4 Ezra⁵⁵ the mystery likewise is eschatological; it concerns the last times and the destiny of Israel revealed to Ezra through dreams and visions (4 Ezra 12:33-36; 14:5-9). The angel Uriel tells Ezra that "the Most High hath revealed many secrets unto thee. For he hath seen thy righteous conduct⁵⁶ for thy people. . . ." (4 Ezra 10:38). Uriel then explains how the vision of the suffering woman refers to Zion which will be restored (4 Ezra 10:40-50). The mysteries of God concerning the times and seasons are to be kept secret (4 Ezra 14:5-8)--reminiscent of the command to secrecy in the mystery cults--just as Moses was ordered to keep some secret, namely, the apocalyptic tradition, while publishing others, that is, the Torah.⁵⁷

It is evident, then, that *μυστήριον* is an important concept in later Jewish apocalyptic⁵⁸ and must not be overlooked in seeking the

⁵⁵Charles, II, 552, dates the final redaction of 4 Ezra from 100-135 A.D., but notes that some sources embodied in the book may go back to about 30 B.C.

⁵⁶Here and elsewhere (e.g., 4 Ezra 12:36, "Thou alone has been found worthy to learn this mystery of the Most High") 4 Ezra contrasts sharply with Daniel in that the former attributes the revelation of divine mysteries to individuals on the basis of their upright conduct (as in Gnosticism where the mysteries are revealed to the *τελειοι* *ἡρώς τε καὶ κός*), whereas the latter insists that God alone reveals His mysteries to those whom He chooses--and not because of their own righteousness or wisdom.

⁵⁷Cf. Charles, II, 621, n. 6.

⁵⁸L. Johnston, "The Mystery of Marriage," *Scripture*, XI (1959), 2, concludes that the term mystery "belongs to the language of Jewish apocalyptic literature."

background for Pauline usage of the term. Admittedly, there are some similarities between this apocalyptic usage, on the one hand, and that of the mystery cults and Gnosticism, on the other. There is a similar demand for silence--although not nearly so strongly stressed in apocalyptic. Both hold that the mysteries are revealed only to the perfect and wise. Journeys to heaven and hell, depicted liturgically in the mystery religions, while taking the form of dreams and visions in Gnosticism and apocalyptic, play an important role in both. And the role of the mystagogue in the mystery cults finds a parallel in the role of the angel who guides the apocalyptists through the heavenly visions and explains the mysteries to him⁵⁹--although Brown contends that the role of angels as guides to the heavenly secrets would flow quite naturally from the hypothesis that the heavenly $\tau\eta\omega$ was the ultimate background of the revelation of the divine mysteries.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, there are important differences between apocalyptic mysteries and those of the mystery cults--differences that are indeed decisive. Bornkamm summarizes:

1. The apocalyptic mysteries do not relate to a destiny which the deity or the heavenly redeemer suffers, but to one which the deity decides and ordains; 2. reception of the mysteries is not deification in apocalyptic; 3. the mysteries are in apocalyptic oriented to an eschatological cosmic revelation.⁶¹

⁵⁹Bornkamm, IV, 816.

⁶⁰Brown, XX, 430, n. 57.

⁶¹Bornkamm, IV, 816. Cf. also E. J. Price, "Jewish Apocalyptic and the Mysteries," The Hibbert Journal, XVIII (1919), 101-104, who cites the following differences between Jewish apocalyptic and the mystery cults: the dualism of apocalyptic is ethical, that of the mystery cults metaphysical; in the mystery religions salvation is by deification, whereas this mystical identification with God is wholly

We agree with Price who, while admitting "that in apocalyptic we have a parallel phenomenon to that of the Hellenistic mystery religions,"⁶² concludes that

in estimating the points of contact between Paul and the mystery religions, we must have due regard for the apocalyptic background of his thought; conceptions which appear to be derived from the mystery cults may really have their roots in Paul's apocalyptic Judaism.⁶³

We are now ready to focus our attention on the occurrence and usage of *μυστήριον* in the Qumran literature.⁶⁴ The term appears approximately fifty times,⁶⁵ frequently enough to warrant a close

alien to Jewish piety; the conception of faith is much more prominent in apocalyptic than in the cults; and while for the mysteries the heavenly world exists here and now, apocalyptic is primarily eschatological, pointing forward to the time, not far off, when the evil forces will be destroyed and God's plan of deliverance fully realized. In connection with this last point, Albert Schweitzer, Paul and His Interpreters, translated by W. Montgomery (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), pp. 227, 228, insists that of eschatology in the late Jewish or early Christian sense, that is, when reference is made to the end of the world as expected in the immediate future, and the events, hopes, and fears connected with it--and not just the subjective future end of individuals--"there is not a single trace to be found in any Graeco-Oriental doctrine."

⁶²Price, XVIII, 96.

⁶³Ibid., XVIII, 112.

⁶⁴Although scholars differ in their estimation of the composition date of the Qumran writings, we accept the first century B.C. as an approximate date. Cf. Frank M. Cross, Jr., The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1958), pp. 89, 90. Cf. also Joseph Coppens, "'Mystery' in the Theology of Saint Paul and its Parallels at Qumran," in Paul and Qumran, edited by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd., c.1968), p. 137, n. 6.

⁶⁵Cf. Karl G. Kuhn, Konkordanz Zu Den Qumrantexten (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1960), pp. 203, 204. He cites the following references of *ῥῆμα*: 1 Qp Hab (The Commentary on Habakkuk) 7:5,8,14; 1 QS (The Rule of the Community) 3:23; 4:6,18; 9:18; 11:3,5,19; 1 QM (The War Rule) 3:9,15; 14:9,14; 16:11,16; 17:9; 1 QH (The Hymns)

examination of its use here with a view to determining to what extent, if any, the Pauline concept of mystery finds its source in this particular Semitic background. The term סֵת appears most frequently, but מִסְתָּר also occurs a significant number of times, sometimes parallel to סֵת (as, for example, in 1 QH 11:10),⁶⁶ with no apparent distinction. Finally, מִסְתָּרִים also occurs.

Cosmic mysteries, such as we have already seen in the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, are also to be found in the Qumran writings. 1 QH 1:11,12, in which the psalmist thanks God for ordaining "the heavenly lights to their mysteries, the stars to their paths . . . to their tasks,"⁶⁷ refers to the orbits of the heavenly bodies as mysteries. The Psalmist then, having described thunder and lightning, the earth and its seas, and man and his destiny, says, "These things I know by the wisdom which comes from Thee, for Thou hast unstopped my ears to marvellous mysteries" (1 QH 1:21). The same chapter speaks

1:11,13,21,29; 2:13; 4:27; 5:25,36; 7:27; 8:6,11 (twice); 9:23; 11:10; 12:13,20; 13:2,3,13; f (fragment) 3:7; 6:5; 17:3; 25:1; 50:5; 1 Q26 1:4; 1 Q27 1:2,3,4,7; 13:3; 1 Q30 4:1; 1 Q36 9:2; 16:2; 1 Q40 1:2; 4 QMa 12 (fragment of an old edition of The War Rule from Cave 4); CD (Damascus Document) 3:18. Cf. also E. Vogt, "'Mysteria' in Textibus Qumran," Biblica, 37 (1956), 247-256, who prefaces his list of occurrences of mystery in the Qumran writings by saying: "Iuvabit colligere textus qumranicos, in quibus haec vox adhibetur, quo facilius sensus vocis, momentum in doctrina sectae, relatio ad cosimilem usum vocis 'mysterium' in N.T. elucidari possit, ubi fere 30ies invenitur."

⁶⁶Cf. Eduard Lohse, Die Texte aus Qumran (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), p. 154.

⁶⁷All quotations in English from the Qumran literature are, unless otherwise indicated, from G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English (Middlesex, England: Penguin, c.1962), pp. 71-249.

of sounds which God brings forth according to their mysteries (1 QH 1:29), possibly a reference to human language,⁶⁸ or to the measure and the harmony basic to poetry and music.⁶⁹

The Qumran writings also speak of evil mysteries. In The War Rule we read:

In all our generations Thou hast bestowed Thy wonderful favours on the remnant (of Thy people) under the dominion of Satan. During all the mysteries of his Malevolence he has not made (us) stray from Thy Covenant (1 QM 14:8, 9).⁷⁰

Precisely what these mysteries are is unclear, but the context seems to suggest that they are evil forces at work in the world to destroy God's elect. The psalmist speaks of the mysteries of sin⁷¹ in 1 QH 5:36, referring to the bread of wailing and the drink of tears that become his enemies and "change the works of God by their transgression." What he means here is likewise unclear. We also hear of "the mysteries of sin" in Livre des Mysteres, this time in a definite eschatological setting. In 1 Q27 1:2 we find the bare phrase $\text{מִסְתֵּרֵי חַטָּאִת}$; unfortunately the context is mutilated. Later the text describes

⁶⁸Cf. Brown, XX, 441, n. 88.

⁶⁹Cf. Coppens, p. 135. Coppens (p. 135) also lists among the cosmic mysteries the mysteries of the abyss (1 Q27 f. 13:3) and the mysterious domain of a new Paradise (1 QH 8:6).

⁷⁰Brown, XX, 440, translates verse 8, "against the dominion of Belial and against his hostile mysteries."

⁷¹The phrase here (cf. Lohse, p. 132), as well as in 1 QHf 50:5 [cf. E. L. Sukenik, editor, The Dead Sea Scrolls of the Hebrew University (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1955)] and 1 Q27 1:2 [cf. D. Barthelémy and J. T. Milik, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert: Qumran Cave I (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955), I] is $\text{מִסְתֵּרֵי חַטָּאִת}$. It also occurs in 1 Q27 1:7, although here Milik reads $\text{מִסְתֵּרֵי חַטָּאִת}$.

the signs of the mystery to come: wickedness will vanish like smoke; righteousness will be revealed like a sun; and "all who cleave to the mysteries of sin ($\text{וְכָל הַיְּדִיעוּת הַזֶּה}$) shall be no more" (1 Q27 1:7).

This brings us to the mysteries of divine providence. God, who has created both the spirit of light and the spirit of darkness (1 QS 3:28), does permit the evil mysteries to function for a time. 1 QS 3:20-23 tells us:

The angel of darkness leads all the children of righteousness astray, and until his end, all their sin, iniquities, wickedness, and all their unlawful deeds are caused by his dominion in accordance with the mysteries of God.

But God loathes the counsel (דָּבָר) of the angel of darkness (1 QS 4:1) and "in the mysteries of His understanding, and in His glorious wisdom, God has ordained an end for falsehood, and at the time of the visitation He will destroy it for ever" (1QS 4:18).⁷² How this will happen is metaphorically described in The War Rule, which speaks of the sons of light marching in battle against the sons of darkness, carrying trumpets of ambush on which is written, "The Mysteries of God shall undo Wickedness" (1QM 3:8,9).

The trials which the mysterious wisdom of God inflicts on people are another aspect of the mysteries of divine providence. The psalmist is confident that God will plead his cause:

⁷²Franz Mussner, "Contributions Made by Qumran to the Understanding of the Epistle to the Ephesians," in Paul and Qumran, p. 160, comments: "The community is convinced that all time is determined by God, especially the hour of his action at the end of time. Time lies 'in the mysteries' of his wise providence." Cf. also 1 QM 14:14 which, although not clear, seems to speak of God's wonderful mysteries in terms of casting down the angels.

For it is according to the mystery of Thy wisdom that Thou hast rebuked me. Thou wilt conceal the truth until (its) time, (and righteousness) until its appointed moment. Thy rebuke shall become my joy and gladness. . . . (1QH 9:23,24).

God's mysterious providence is also seen when His soldiers "begin to fall by the mysteries of God" in order to test all those ready for battle (1 QM 16:11).⁷³ Thereupon the high priest encourages the soldiers in battle with the words: "And you, the sons of His Covenant, be strong in the ordeal of God! His mysteries shall uphold you until He moves His hand for His trials to come to an end" (1 QM 17:8,9).

Finally, God's providential mysteries relate especially to Israel, His elect people in terms of both present pardon and future salvation. When the remnant continued to wallow in sin and uncleanness in spite of the fact that God had revealed to them the hidden things, that is, His Sabbaths, feasts, righteous testimonies, truthful ways and purposes of His will, "God, in His wonderful mysteries, forgave them their sin and pardoned their wickedness. . . ." (CD 3:18).

In 1 QpHab. 7:1-5 we have an example of God's mysteries referring to Israel's future. Commenting on Hab. 2:1,2 the author says:

And God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but He did not make known to him when time would come to an end. And as for that which He said, "That he who reads may read it speedily," interpreted this concerns

⁷³Brown, XX, 437, n. 78, also cites 1 QM 16:15, 16 which he translates: "Blessed be God who strengthens the heart of His people, (who) tests by . . . your slain, because from of old you have heard of the mysteries of God."

the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets.⁷⁴

The commentator goes on to say that the final age shall be delayed beyond the expectation of the prophets, "for the mysteries of God are astounding" (1QpHab 7:8). Nevertheless, "all the ages of God reach their appointed end as He determines for them in the mysteries of His wisdom" (1 QpHab. 7:13, 14).⁷⁵ This eschatological motif is striking in 1 Q 27:3,4 where we read: "They know not the mystery to come, nor do they understand the things of the past. They know not that which shall befall them, nor do they save their soul from the mystery to come." Isaac Rabinowitz describes this mystery as "the expected consummation in which the idolatrous enemy-nations and the apostates of Israel would be destroyed forever, while Israel's righteous remnant should enjoy eternal dominion."⁷⁶ And he notes a significant parallel of the phrase "a mystery which is to come" (מִסְתֵּרִים לְבָרֵךְ) in Dan. 2:28,29: "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets (סֵפֶת סֵפֶת), and He hath made known . . . what shall be in the end of days . . . and He that revealeth secrets

⁷⁴Brown, XX, 438, n. 80, referring to the phrase "all the mysteries (מִסְתֵּרִים) of the words of His servants the prophets," notes a clear reminiscence of Amos 3:8 where God reveals His secret (סֵפֶת) to His servants the prophets.

⁷⁵Mussner, pp. 160, 161, cites various interpretations of this passage. His own is that all periods of time attain that measure which God in the mysteries of His wisdom has ordained.

⁷⁶Isaac Rabinowitz, "The Authorship, Audience and Date of the de Vaux Fragment of an Unknown Work," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXI (1952), 23.

hath made known to thee what shall come to pass."⁷⁷ The same expression, 𐤓𐤕 𐤕𐤓 𐤕𐤓 𐤕𐤓, also occurs in 1 QS 11:3,4: "For my light has sprung from the source of His knowledge; my eyes have beheld His marvellous deeds, and the light of my heart, the mystery to come."

In the Qumran writings it is God alone who, in the final analysis, reveals the mysteries.

For without Thee no way is perfect, and without Thy will nothing is done. It is Thou who has taught all knowledge and all things come to pass by Thy will. There is none beside Thee to dispute Thy counsel or to understand all Thy holy design, or to contemplate the depth of Thy mysteries and the power of Thy might.⁷⁸

God reveals His marvelous mysteries hidden from ordinary men to the Qumran community:

From the source of His righteousness are my judgments;
 From His marvelous mysteries is there a light in my heart.
 My eye has contemplated what is eternal;
 Sound wisdom which is hidden from wise men,
 and discretion (hidden) from mankind . . .
 A fountain of glory (hidden) from the worldly assembly--
 God has granted these to those whom He elected as an eternal
 possession.
 He has constituted them as an inheritance in the lot of the
 saints;
 And He has joined their society with the sons of heaven
 into a unified congregation and an assembly of saintly
 fabric.⁷⁹

The psalmist says that God has made known to the sons of His goodwill "the counsel of Thy truth, and has taught them Thy marvellous mysteries" (1 QH 11:9,10). Included among those who have received these mysteries

⁷⁷Ibid., LXXI, 22, 23. Cf. supra, pp. 44, 45.

⁷⁸1 QS 11:18, 19. This is followed by an acknowledgement of insignificance and limitations of man who is but moulded clay.

⁷⁹1 QS 11:5-8, translated by Brown, XX, 438, who notes that "The last line is an echo which connects the community's special knowledge of divine mysteries with the ancient notion of the angelic 𐤕𐤓 𐤕𐤓."

is the psalmist himself:⁸⁰ "by Thy Holy Spirit I have faithfully hearkened to Thy marvellous counsel. In the mystery of Thy wisdom Thou hast opened knowledge to me. . . ." (1 QH 12: 11-13).⁸¹ Again:

I (thank Thee, O Lord), for Thou hast enlightened me through Thy truth. In Thy marvellous mysteries, and in Thy lovingkindness to a man (of vanity, and) in the greatness of Thy mercy to a perverse heart Thou hast granted me knowledge" (1 QH 7:26-33).⁸²

Here the psalmist acknowledges that he is unworthy of receiving these mysteries. Elsewhere he confesses: "Before Thee no man is just . . . (that he may) understand all Thy mysteries" (1 QH 12:19,20). Particularly are those of carnal spirit unable to understand the mysteries of God (1 QH 13:14). Nor do they want to, according to 1 QS 5:11:

For they are not reckoned in His Covenant. They have neither inquired nor sought after Him concerning His laws that they might know the hidden things in which they have sinfully erred; and matters revealed they have treated with insolence.

The sons of truth who possess the secret counsels of the spirit are obligated to conceal the mysteries of truth⁸³ ($\overline{\pi} \text{ } \underline{\gamma} \text{ } \overline{\tau}$ ' $\underline{\gamma} \text{ } \overline{\tau}$)⁸⁴

⁸⁰Some identify the anonymous author of The Hymns as the Teacher of Righteousness, but this is uncertain. Multiple authorship is not precluded.

⁸¹Cf. also 1 QS 11:3.

⁸²In the context of God's marvelous mysteries the author asks, "Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord . . . ? And he concludes, "For Thou art an eternal God; all Thy ways are determined for ever (and ever) and there is none other beside Thee" (1 QH 7:34-49). Cf. Dan. 2:47.

⁸³The psalmist speaks of those who share in his secret counsel and then go "as talebearers before the children of mischief concerning the mystery which Thou hast hidden in me . . . and because of their guilt, Thou hast hidden the fountain of understanding and the counsel of truth" (1 QH 5:25, 26).

⁸⁴Cf. Lohse, p. 12.

from those ruled by the spirit of falsehood (1 QS 4:6-17).⁸⁵ On the other hand, those who have received the mysteries must instruct those who have chosen the way of the sect "in the mysteries of marvellous truth that in the midst of the men of the Community they may walk perfectly together in all that has been revealed to them" (1 QS 9:18,19). The author of The Hymns apparently has a particularly responsible role in communicating the divine mysteries. He insists, even in the face of the taunts of the wicked: "But to the elect of righteousness Thou has made me a banner, and a discerning interpreter of wonderful mysteries, to try (those who practise) truth and to test those who love correction" (1 QH 2:13,14). Elsewhere the psalmist says:

Through me Thou hast illumined the face of the Congregation and hast shown Thine infinite power. For Thou hast given me knowledge through Thy marvellous mysteries, and hast shown Thyself mighty within me in the midst of Thy marvellous Council" (1 QH 4:26-28).

It is apparent then that *μυστήριον* is an important concept in Qumran literature. Its use is varied:⁸⁶ sometimes cosmic mysteries, then again evil mysteries, and most often mysteries of divine

⁸⁵Brown, XX, 438-440, who sees as one of the mysteries of God the interpretation of the law He has entrusted to the Qumran community, accordingly finds other commands of secrecy in 1 QS 9:17,22 and CD 15:10, 11, the latter involving untrained initiates of the community. In interpreting the allegory of 1 QH 8:4-36 Brown, XX, 440, finds the law a secret source of life entrusted to the sect and suggests that a certain person, perhaps the Teacher of Righteousness, is spoken of as hidden, reminiscent of the Elect One of Enoch.

⁸⁶Brown, XX, 443, cautions that in evaluating the Qumran use of mystery one must keep in mind that we have only part of the community's literature.

providence.⁸⁷ They all have their center in God and no one can know them unless God graciously reveals them.⁸⁸ Frequently, they have an eschatological flavoring, pointing to that climactic mystery in the not too distant future when God's people will be vindicated and His enemies destroyed.

We close our survey of the Semitic background of *μυστήριον* with a brief look at its use in Rabbinic literature. Although Rabbinic Judaism after the destruction of Jerusalem developed a strong distaste for the secret doctrines of apocalyptic, yet earlier the Rabbinate itself engaged in apocalyptic speculations⁸⁹ and made some use of the concept of mystery.⁹⁰ Among the mysteries in Rabbinic writings are:⁹¹ (1) The Mishna, the traditional doctrine of Israel. It is by holding to this oral tradition that the Israelites show themselves

⁸⁷L. Johnston, "The Mystery of Marriage, " Scripture, XI (1959), 2, says the Qumran literature uses the term "mystery" in much the same way as Daniel and the New Testament Gospels, namely, as "the hidden wisdom of the divine plan and of its execution, revealed to the prophets in part, and now to the sect of the new covenant." Brown, XX, 443, also finds a concept unique in the pre-Christian literature: the mysteries of the special interpretation of the Torah.

⁸⁸There is no emphasis in Qumran writings on the role of dreams and visions in such revelation. In 1 QH 12:11-13 God reveals His mysteries through His Holy Spirit. Brown, XX, 441, n. 89, suggests that this "could be the good spirit who rules over human actions, or it may be a vague reference to the power of God."

⁸⁹Bornkamm, IV, 817.

⁹⁰We find both *תסוד* and *סוד* used, as well as *סודות*, the transliteration of *μυστήριον* into Hebrew. And sometimes *סודות* became *סודות*, "hidden things." Cf. Knox, p. 227.

⁹¹We follow the list compiled by Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), I, 659, 660.

to be the true children of God, in contrast to the Gentiles who do not have this mystery. That is the reason this mystery was not put into writing and that too is why Israel was divinely charged not to reveal it to the people of the world (P^e siq R5, 14b). (2) Circumcision, a mystery (תּוּב) of God which He has revealed only to Abraham (Tanch B תּוּב תּוּב §23, 40^a); (3) The end, that is, the beginning of the Messianic Age (Tanch 4574 56^a); (4) The calculation of the calendar (pRH 2, 58^b, 22). This mystery (calculation of the calendar according to the lunar year) God has given to the Israelites, while the Gentiles reckon according to the sun (Ex R 15, 79^a). (5) Certain matters of the Torah, especially the grounds of the Torah and cosmological and theosophical esoteric doctrines. These mysteries God will reveal to him who occupies himself with the Torah for its own sake (Aboth 6, 2) and curbs himself in this world for the sake of the Torah (Chag 14^a). The Torah then is a kind of "envelope for the mystery of divine creation which underlies it and all being and to which one must seek to penetrate in mystical interpretation."⁹²

From our survey of pre-Christian Jewish literature two things seem clear. First, the concept of *μυστήριον* was rather widespread in Jewish circles. Secondly, *μυστήριον*, which one author calls a "chameleon-like word,"⁹³ was used with a considerable variety of meaning. We submit that there is ample Semitic background material

⁹²Bornkamm, IV, 817. He also notes (n. 132) that mysteries of the Torah in Heb. En. 11:1 comprehend mysteries of wisdom, deep things of the perfect law, and mysteries of creation.

⁹³Sullivan, I, 249.

from which Paul could have derived his use of *μυστήριον*,⁹⁴ which as we shall see, also subsumes several nuances of meaning. It remains to be seen from an examination of the passages where Paul uses the term *μυστήριον* just how close the similarity is in vocabulary and thought between his usage and that of this pre-Christian Jewish background.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Sullivan, I, 250, referring to the concept of mystery in Daniel, the books of Wisdom, the apocryphal apocalypses, and the Qumran literature, concludes: "All this would provide ample Semitic background-reading for Paul's disciples. To understand all the resonances of the word 'mystery,' there would have been no need for them to seek parallels in the Greek mystery religions of the day."

⁹⁵Brown, XX, 443, holds "that the similarity in word and idea between the N. T. use of *μυστήριον* and the Semitic background . . . is far more valid than any of the far-fetched parallels to the Greek mystery religions hitherto presented."

CHAPTER IV

MYSTERION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament the word *μυστήριον* appears almost exclusively in the Pauline writings. Altogether the term occurs twenty-eight times, three times in the Synoptics, four times in the Apocalypse, and twenty-one times in the Pauline corpus.¹ Before examining the passages in which Paul uses *μυστήριον*, we shall look briefly at the other occurrences of the word in the New Testament, hopefully to see what light its origin and use there might shed on the origin of Paul's use of the term.

In the Gospel accounts *μυστήριον* appears only in the difficult saying of Jesus concerning the purpose of parables, recorded by the Synoptists in the context of the Parable of the Soils (Mark 4: 11: ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ. Luke 8:10: ὑμῖν δέδοται γινῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ. Matt. 13:11 has the same as Luke except for τῶν οὐρανῶν instead of τοῦ Θεοῦ). God gives² to the disciples the mystery of the kingdom. Jeremias comments:

This is surely nothing less than a cry of exaltation! God's gift is for the disciples. Moreover, "the secret of the Kingdom of God" which constitutes God's gift must not be understood as implying general revelations about the coming Kingdom of

¹Included is 1 Cor. 2:1 where the reading is contested.

²The verb δέδοται is perfect, denoting a giving that obtains at that present time, and passive, indicating a circumlocution for the divine name.

God, but, as the singular shows, a particular revelation, namely, the recognition of its present irruption. This recognition is wholly the result of God's grace.³

Christ's statement continues with a sharp antithesis: ἐκείνους δὲ τοῖς ἔξω ἐν παιδαγωγίᾳ τὰ πάντα γίνεταί (Mark 4:11b).⁴ This has led Fr. Bouyer to suggest that the synoptic use of *μυστήριον* is like that of Daniel and the apocalypses in that it refers to "the interpretation of enigmatic symbols, in this case the parables of the Kingdom."⁵ However, we agree with Brown that the synoptic *μυστήριον* has no intrinsic connection with the parabolic method of instruction⁶ and therefore the similarity

³Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, translated by S. H. Hooke (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 13. The significance of the singular *μυστήριον* in Mark, in contrast to the plural *μυστήρια* in Matthew and Luke, is not clear. Henry B. Swete, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan and Company, 1905), p. 76, holds that the *μυστήρια* of Matthew and Luke loses sight of the unity of the gift and belongs to a somewhat later form of the common tradition. Cf. also Otto A. Piper, "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God," Interpretation, I (1947), 196. Piper suggests that "the use of the plural indicates that the two evangelists are not thinking of the factual givenness of the mystery as the believers have it in Jesus Christ; but, rather, of the various implications of that secret, by which the gracious will of God would be revealed to them." Later we shall note Paul's predominant use of the singular. This has led some to conjecture that Mark may have been influenced by Paul and therefore Matthew and Luke have the older tradition. Cf. Raymond E. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament *Mysterion* (I)," Biblica, XXXIX (April 1958), 428.

⁴G. Bornkamm, "*μυστήριον*, *μυσέω*," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1967), IV, 818, states: "The antithesis . . . implies first that the parables contain the mystery, but concealed in such sort that it may be found only by special revelation."

⁵Fr. Bouyer, "*Mysterion*," in Mystery and Mysticism (New York: Philadelphia Library, 1956), p. 22.

⁶Jeremias, p. 15, concludes that Jesus' saying concerns not His parables, but His preaching in general.

between the use of *μυστήριον* here and the method of revealing divine secrets through enigmatic symbols should not be exaggerated.⁷

What precisely is *τὸ μυστήριον τῆς βασιλείας*?⁸

In view of the context of the Parable of the Soils which implies that the kingdom is already active among different kinds of hearers, and that of Matt. 13:16,17 which infers that the disciples are blessed because they see in Jesus the coming of the reign of God, the meaning here seems to be the climactic, yet unpretentious, unroyal coming of God's royal reign in the person of Jesus the Messiah. Bornkamm elaborates:

The mystery of the divine rule . . . can refer, not to some general content of the *βασιλεία*, but only to the fact of its coming. Hence the step from image to matter can be taken only by the faith which grasps the real event of this coming of the divine rule as this event is concealed in the parable but takes place with its proclamation. This view is confirmed by the fact that the phrase *μυστήριον τῆς βασιλείας* had long been current in apocalyptic usage to indicate the counsel of God which is concealed from human eyes, which is disclosed only by revelation, and which will be enacted at the end. . . . the parables point them (the disciples) to the incursion of the divine rule in the word and work of Jesus. This perception is not the result of their own perspicacity or a reward for their own achievement. It is the gift of God's free and sovereign grace. The *μυστήριον τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ* which is revealed to the disciples is thus Jesus Himself as Messiah.⁹

⁷Brown, XXXIX, 429, 430.

⁸Genitive of possession: the mystery that belongs to, or has to do with, the kingdom.

⁹Bornkamm, IV, 818, 819. Cf. also Swete, p. 76, who holds that "the mystery of the kingdom of God is the content of the Gospel . . . i.e., Christ Himself as revealing the Father, and fulfilling His counsels." Similarly, M. Bouttier, "Mystery," in A Companion to the Bible, edited by J.-J. Von Allmen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 277, describes the Markan mystery as "the hidden presence of the Kingdom of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, His words,

While it has been suggested that the source of the synoptic $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\omicron\nu$ is the secret rites and teachings of the mystery cults, it seems much more probable that the word employed here follows the usage of Jewish sources.¹⁰ For example, we find a strong parallel to synoptic usage in Daniel 2 where the mystery refers to God's secret plans which only He as the wise and powerful Lord of history can and does reveal concerning His coming sovereign and eternal kingdom.¹¹ Hans von Soden concludes:

Es unterliegt wohl keinem Zweifel, dass die Danielstellen den Ursprung des neutestamentlichen Sprachgebrauchs von $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\omicron\nu$ angeben; die ursprüngliche Verbindung $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\omicron\nu$ $\tau\eta\varsigma$ $\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ stammt ja ebendaher.¹²

Still there are other parallels in pre-Christian Semitic literature which may form part of the background of the synoptic $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\omicron\nu$. There is, for instance, a reminiscence of the kingdom mystery in En. 41:1. Enoch says that he saw "all the secrets of the heavens, and how the kingdom is divided, and how the actions of men are weighed

His acts; a mystery, for some welcome in Him the arrival of a new world, whereas for others, those who are without, 'everything is in parables' (they understand nothing!)." Likewise H. A. A. Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery-Religions (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), p. 125, says that here the term "suggests the secret purposes or plans of God concerning His kingdom which are coming to light in the work and teaching of Jesus. . . ."

¹⁰Piper, I, 187, suggests that this Semitic usage "agrees better with the Biblical idea of God than does the pagan usage. Throughout the two Testaments the God of the Bible is described as a person who has a purpose with mankind and who, step by step in the history of the chosen people, carries out His plan."

¹¹Cf. Martin H. Franzmann, Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), pp. 121, 122.

¹²Hans von Soden, "Mysterion und Sacramentum in den ersten zwei Jahrhunderten der Kirche," Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, XII (1911), 198.

in the balance." Note how both here, as well as in Christ's saying, the revelation of the mystery of the kingdom has also to do with divine judgment. Furthermore, the fact that until God's final judgment evil does, within the limits of divine providence, impede good is part of the mystery of the times according to 2 Bar. 81:4.¹³ So in the Parable of the Soils fruitful production is hampered by the thorns and the hard and the rocky soil.

There is likewise fertile background in Hebrew thought for the fact that God reveals the mystery of the kingdom to His disciples but conceals it from outsiders. In Wisdom 2:22 we are told that the wicked do not know the mysteries of God. God alone knows the duration of the generations and does not reveal His mysteries to many, according to 2 Bar. 48:3. But He does disclose His marvelous mysteries, hidden from ordinary men, to the Elect (1 QS 11:5-8; also 1 QH 11:9,10).¹⁴ And they in turn are to make these mysteries known to the Elect (1 QS 9:18,19; 1 QH 2:13,14), but not to the sons of falsehood (1 QS 4:6-17). The reason for the difference is explained. The wicked do not understand the mysteries of God because they do not want to (1 QS 5:11). So, too, the synoptic mystery remains obscure to outsiders because they do not care for the truth and are unwilling

¹³Cf. also 1 QS 3:20-23 where the activity of the angel of darkness in leading the righteous astray is "in accordance with the mysteries of God."

¹⁴At times, as in 4 Ezra 10:38 and 12:36, God reveals His mysteries to people on the basis of their own righteous conduct. Elsewhere we are told that God reveals His mysteries to the humble (Sir. 3:19), and, in fact, man's unworthiness to receive knowledge of God's mysteries, granted purely by grace, is stressed (cf. 1 QH 7:26-33 and 12:19, 20).

to learn.¹⁵ They who do "not want to understand will not be permitted to understand."¹⁶

The other non-Pauline references to *μυστήριον* occur in the Apocalypse of John. Here, too, Semitic usage of *μυστήριον*, particularly that of Daniel, makes quite unnecessary and patently forced the view that there is "clearly present here a parallelism to the Greek Mysteries."¹⁷ In Rev. 1:19,20 the one like the Son of Man, holding seven stars in his right hand and surrounded by seven lampstands, tells John to write ὁ μὲλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα, and then speaks of the *μυστήριον* of the seven stars and the seven lampstands. This seems highly reminiscent of Dan. 2:29: ὁ ἀνακαλύπτων μυστήρια ἐδήλωσέ

¹⁵Isaiah 6:9,10 which all of the synoptists quote here speaks of the divine judgment of the hardening of the heart. William F. Arndt, The Gospel According to St. Luke (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956), p. 230, comments: "In the case of those hearers of the parable, too, who are contrasted with Jesus' disciples, one must say that the judgment of God strikes them: the saving truth is withheld from them. They reap what they sowed."

¹⁶Ibid., p. 227. With regard to this concealment of the mystery from outsiders, Brown, XXXIX, 431, rightly cautions: "We should not over-emphasize the denial by Jesus of knowledge of the mystery of the kingdom to outsiders. After all, the Synoptic passage emphasizes the positive side--revelation to the disciples. And even to outsiders the mystery is at least given; and the parables which cloak it are not meaningless narration. The parable gives some knowledge of the kingdom of God without completely unveiling it. The complete unveiling will come not so much by way of added revelation, as of added perception gained through faith. . . ."

¹⁷Percy Gardner, The Religious Experience of Saint Paul (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), p. 72.

τοὺς ὧς δεῖ γινέσθαι.¹⁸ Again here as in Daniel 2 the *μυστήριον* involves both the symbol itself as well as its meaning or content. Rev. 17:5,7 is similar, where the *μυστήριον* is the name Babylon and the beast on which she rides, that is, a symbol containing a secret meaning, and also the meaning of that symbol. Also the judgment motif, apparent in Dan. 2:44 and En. 41:1, 68:5, and 103:2-7, comes through clearly in this eschatological mystery of anti-godly forces (compare Rev. 17:1,8,16,17; 18:1-10).

It is also noteworthy that the symbols used to convey mysterious meaning in Rev. 1:20 and 17:5,7 are quite familiar from Semitic usage of *μυστήριον*. The former employs a popular device of symbolic mystery visions, namely, a numbered series, in this case, seven stars and seven lampstands (compare the four kingdoms of Daniel 2, the six metallic mountains of Enoch 52, and the seven heavens of 3 Baruch 1). And the latter passage's use of a name as a mystery finds precedence both in Enoch 43 where heavenly mysteries include stars which are given names by God, names of His saints on earth, and in En. 69:14 where the hidden name is mentioned in the heavenly oath, a name soon identified as that of the Son of Man whose glory is great and whose judgment of sinners is sure (En. 69:26-29).¹⁹

¹⁸J. Armitage Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (London: Macmillan and Co., 1909), p. 236, however, doubts whether the writer intended a direct allusion because in Daniel the term has a general sense whereas here it is used in a somewhat special sense.

¹⁹For these and other Semitic parallels to the symbols of the mystery of the Apocalypse, cf. Brown, XXXIX, 432, 433.

The final use of *μυστήριον* in the Apocalypse, this time referring not to a secret, symbolic meaning, but to the secret eschatological plan of God, occurs in 10:7. An angel swears that there will no longer be a delay (verse 6), but in the days of the call of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound the trumpet, *καὶ ἐτελέσθη τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς ἐπηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφῆτας* (verse 7). This last phrase recalls Amos 3:7: *ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς περὶ ᾧ, ἐὰν μὴ ἀποκαλύψῃ τὰς ἐκείνου πρὸς τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ τοὺς προφῆτας*. And according to 1 QpHab. 7:1-5 God did not reveal to Habakkuk when time would come to an end but He did make known to the Teacher of Righteousness "all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets." The commentator goes on to say that the final age shall be delayed beyond the expectation of the prophets, and yet all the ages of God reach their appointed end as He determines in the mysteries of His wisdom (1 QpHab. 7:8,13,14). Now according to Rev. 10:6,7 the delay is over and at the trumpet call of the seventh angel, the mystery of God is fulfilled.²⁰ God's secret plan has moved to its definitive, climactic conclusion.

In view then of the fairly frequent thought and language parallels to Semitic literature underlying the extra-Pauline occurrences of *μυστήριον* in the New Testament, it does not seem unreasonable to expect a similar background for Paul's own use of the term.

²⁰Some parallel to this eschatological mystery seems to be reflected also in 2 Bar. 85:8-10 and 4 Ezra 14:5.

To this special study we now address ourselves as we consider the twenty-one appearances of *μυστήριον* in the Pauline writings,²¹ beginning with 2 Thess. 2:7. It reads: τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἦδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας· μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄετι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένεται. The context, which describes Christ's parousia, speaks of two signs preceding His return, namely, the coming of the apostasy or rebellion (ἡ ἀποστασία)²² and the appearance of the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction (ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας) (verse 3). Paul then goes on to say in verses 6 to 8:

And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming (RSV).²³

²¹They include 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Cor. 2:1 (contested reading), 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Rom. 11:25,26; Col. 1:26,27; 2:2; 4:3; Eph. 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32; 6:19; 1 Tim. 3:9,16.

²²For the suggestion that the term ἀποστασία, after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, became a fixed element in apocalyptic tradition as one of the fearful signs of the end, cf. James E. Frame, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by Charles A. Briggs, Samuel R. Driver, and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), pp. 38, 251.

²³The force (τὸ κατέχον) or person (ὁ κατέχων) holding back both the man of lawlessness and the mystery of lawlessness is not identified by Paul. Among numerous conjectures as to the identity of this obstacle, Paul H. Furley, "The Mystery of Lawlessness," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, VIII (April 1946), 188, n. 55, finds as one of the most plausible the identification of τὸ κατέχον as the heavenly host and its leader (ὁ κατέχων), St. Michael. A novel interpretation is offered by Joseph Coppens, "'Mystery' in the Theology of Saint Paul and its Parallels at Qumran," in Paul and Qumran, edited by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (London: Geoffrey Chapman

The term *μυστήριον* here is limited by the genitive, *τῆς ἀνομίας*, probably best taken as a genitive of quality, "the mystery which is characterized by lawlessness."²⁴ The mystery thus is associated with revolt against Christ's law. It is also associated with, though distinct from, the man of lawlessness, and thus contrasts with the revealed secrets of God's redemptive plan, which are associated with Christ.²⁵ Perhaps the mystery of lawlessness then is most suitably interpreted as Satan's²⁶ continuously operative, evil plan to oppose God's redemptive plan which culminates in the person and work of Christ. Furley, who calls this pericope "a miniature apocalypse," feels this interpretation is in keeping with the way apocalyptic writers like to get behind the scenes of human history where the cosmic forces of good and evil operate.²⁷ In a similar vein Brown explains the mystery of lawlessness this way:

The economy of evil (like the economy of divine salvation) is a mystery because it is the work of a supernatural being, beyond

Ltd., c.1968), pp. 156-158, in which he sees *ὁ κατέχων* as the man of iniquity and *τὸ κατέχον* as the great apostasy.

²⁴Furley, VIII, 187, 188.

²⁵Ibid., VIII, 189. Furley admits it is tempting to see in "the mystery of lawlessness" the antithesis of "the mystery of godliness" of 1 Tim. 3:16, though he feels the contrast is not precise. This contrast is also noted by J. B. Lightfoot, Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, in Classic Commentary Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1947), p.114.

²⁶According to 2:9 it is *κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ* that the lawless one comes. For the thought that behind the evil and lawlessness in the world is a supreme evil spirit and archenemy of Christ, cf. also Eph. 2:2 and 2 Cor. 6:14,15.

²⁷Furley, VIII, 188-191.

human knowledge. We have here the mystery of a kingdom, Satan's not God's; and it is a kingdom that is continually operative in this world until Jesus Christ destroys it at his coming.²⁸

Now without claiming that Paul made direct use of ideas and language from the Qumran writings, yet Qumran does provide some significant parallels, both conceptual and verbal, to Paul's use of *μυστήριον* in 2 Thessalonians 2, indicating that these ideas and terms were current in the pre-Christian Semitic world--and Paul just may have been familiar with them. We find, for example, that the term *τὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἀνομίας* is found almost literally in 1 QH 5:36; 1 QH f. 5:50; and 1 Q27 1:2 (ϣκιδ 'סג). The LXX renders ϣκιδ by ἀνομία about twenty times; thus we may have here the Hebrew original of Paul's *μυστήριον τῆς ἀνομίας*.²⁹ 1 QM 14:8,9 speaks of the dominion of Satan and the mysteries of his animosity (התחזקתו 'סג). And 1 Q27 1:7³⁰ states that at the time of the mystery to come "all who cleave to the mysteries of sin shall be no more." God, in His mysteries, does allow the evil mysteries to function for a time: "The angel of darkness leads all the children of righteousness astray, and until his end, all their sin, iniquities, wickedness, and all their unlawful deeds are caused by his dominion in accordance with the mysteries of God" (1 QS 3:20-23). But "in the mysteries of His understanding, and in His glorious wisdom, God has ordained an end for falsehood,

²⁸Brown, XXXIX, 435.

²⁹Ibid., XXXIX, 436.

³⁰Unfortunately the text is mutilated and various emendations have been suggested.

and at the time of the visitation He will destroy it forever" (1 QS 4:18). We are reminded of Paul's conviction that the lawless one will be revealed ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ καιρῷ (2 Thess. 2:6), that is, the time set by God, and with that revelation will come his destruction by the Lord Jesus (2:8).³¹ Although the Qumran literature offers numerous partial parallels to this text,³² and describes a similar situation in which God's ultimate victory will be preceded by a time of iniquity during which time the man of lawlessness will exercise wide-spread dominion, yet Joseph Coppens' caution is well taken:

We must not lose sight of the differences; the texts do not speak, as does St. Paul, of a personage who will be the ultimate incarnation of impiety, nor do they invoke the Messiah as the adversary and the conqueror of the man of sin.³³

Turning to 1 Corinthians, we find *μυστήριον* used six times, two of which occur in chapter two. We will consider these together since they are very closely related. The first passage, 2:1, involves a most difficult textual problem. Nestle reads τὸ *κατεύρεον* τοῦ θεοῦ and relegates *μυστήριον* to the

³¹Leon Morris, The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians in The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, edited by R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., c.1959) XIII, 227, comments: "Paul thinks of God as being in control of the whole process. While there are mysteries here . . . yet what is abundantly plain is that God is over all. No wicked person, be he Satan, be he the Man of Lawlessness . . . can overstep the bounds which God has appointed him. . . . Evil will not pass beyond its limits. God's purpose, not that of Satan or his henchmen, will finally be seen to have been effected."

³²Coppens, p. 141, adds to those we have noted an expression corresponding to *ὡς τῆς ἀπωλείας* in CD 6:15; 13:14; 1 QS 9:16; 10:19.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Cr. e.g., Bornkamm, IV, 819, n. 141.

critical apparatus. Westcott and Hort favor *μυστήριον*.

The textual evidence is divided: *μυστήριον* is supported by the Egyptian type of text (p⁴⁶ ⁸⁵* C sy^p bo, and others); *μδετύριον* is found in the Western (D E G vulg, but also B sa, and others. A choice solely on the basis of textual grounds is precarious indeed.

Yet perhaps *μυστήριον* is to be preferred³⁵ for the following reasons.

So far as usage is concerned, the linking of *μδετύριον* with *καταγγέλλειν* and *τοῦ θεοῦ* is uncommon in the New Testament, while the expression *μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ* occurs three times (1 Cor. 4:1; Col. 2:2; Rev. 10:7), and is often the object of verbs of speaking or making known like *καταγγέλλειν* (Col. 1:28), *ἀλλεῖν* (1 Cor. 2:7; 14:2; Col. 4:3), *λέγειν* (1 Cor. 15:51; Rev. 17:7), *φανεροῦν* (Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:26; 4:4), and *γνωρίζειν* (Rom. 16:26; Col. 1:27; Eph. 1:9; 3:3,5,10; 6:19). Furthermore, the frequency with which the phrase "mysteries of God" occurs in the Qumran writings may also favor the reading of *μυστήριον* here.³⁶

³⁵So *Ibid.*; Brown, XXXIX, 444, 445; Coppens, p. 146, n. 34; James Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, in *The Moffatt New Testament Commentary* (New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.) VII, 23; and Robinson, p. 237. Those favoring *μδετύριον* include: Lightfoot, p. 171; Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, in *The International Critical Commentary*, edited by Samuel Driver, Alfred Plummer, and Charles A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1914), p. 30; Charles J. Ellicott, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1887), p. 33; and F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *Clark's Foreign Theological Library* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1889) I, 124.

³⁶Brown, XXXIX, 444, 445.

On the admittedly rather uncertain assumption then that *μυστήριον* is the original reading here, Paul says in 2:1: "And when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the mystery of God with superior eloquence or wisdom."³⁷ The meaning of *μυστήριον* here is no doubt the same as in 2:7 to which we will presently turn. However, we should point out that already in 2:1 Paul is connecting the term *μυστήριον* with the kerygma of Christ; for he continues, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (*χρυστόν . . . ἐσταυρωμένον*)" (2:2). Thus Bornkamm notes that "*κηρύσσειν χρυστόν ἐσταυρωμένον* in 1 Cor. 1:23 means with reference to the community *καταγγέλλειν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ* (2:1)."³⁸ The implications of this kerygmatic character of the Pauline *μυστήριον* for an understanding of its meaning we will see in connection with 2:7.

After reiterating that his message was not given with clever arguments of human wisdom but with the power of the Spirit, that the Corinthians' faith might rest not on human wisdom, but on the power of God, Paul goes on to say:

Wisdom, however, we do speak among the mature (*τελειόους*), but not a wisdom of this age nor of the rulers of this age who are doomed to perish. Rather we speak God's secret wisdom (*σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ*), a hidden wisdom which God predetermined before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew. For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written,

³⁷Unless otherwise indicated, translations of the Pauline texts are my own.

³⁸Bornkamm, IV, 819.

"What no one has ever seen or heard or imagined--all that God prepared for those who love Him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit fathoms everything, even the depths of God (2:7-10).

It is difficult to determine to what the expression *ἐν μυστηρίῳ* refers. It is unacceptable, grammatically, to refer it to the following participle (*ἀποκεκρυμμένῃν*). Some, however, have suggested that the phrase is to be taken with *λαλοῦμεν*,³⁹ in which case it would characterize the manner of instruction. Others, and perhaps this is preferable, connect *ἐν μυστηρίῳ* with *σοφίαν*.⁴⁰ Several modern translations reflect this choice by rendering the phrase with the adjective "secret."⁴¹

"Yet," as Brown points out, "the introduction of *μυστήριον* in a separate prepositional phrase seems to indicate a special role for it in Paul's mind."⁴² Seemingly the NEB tries to indicate this with the rendering: "I speak God's hidden wisdom, his secret purpose framed from the very beginning. . . ." Nevertheless, we agree with Mitton that Paul's chief interest here is in "wisdom," not "mystery."⁴³ This wisdom, Paul makes unmistakably clear, is the antithesis of

³⁹Cf. F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and revised by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1961), p. 118, who indicate it is similar to classical usage and render "in the form of mystery." Cf. also Elllicott, p. 38.

⁴⁰Cf. Lightfoot, p. 175. Also Robertson and Plummer, p. 37.

⁴¹The RSV renders: "a secret and hidden wisdom of God." And Good News for Modern Man has: "God's secret wisdom."

⁴²Brown, XXXIX, 437.

⁴³Cf. Leslie C. Mitton, The Epistle to the Ephesians (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 87.

worldly wisdom; it has its source in God. It is God's plan of salvation prepared beforehand, long concealed, but now at last revealed. It is "the divine will to save fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ."⁴⁴ It would appear then that the phrase σοφία ἐν μυστηρίῳ covers much of the same conceptual ground which μυστήριον alone covers in other Pauline texts (as we shall see later).⁴⁵

Certainly the close combination of wisdom and mystery was no novelty in Jewish thought. In the Apocrypha, as we have seen, personified wisdom is God's agent in revealing and teaching secrets (Sir. 4:18; Wis. 7:21). And the origin of wisdom is called a mystery (Wis. 6:22). More significant yet, is the parallel to this wisdom-mystery combination in Daniel 2. Bouyer comments:

We are here at the exact source of the mystery of St. Paul as it is to appear in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The whole literary context of this mystery is the same as in the second chapter of Daniel. The mystery there likewise appears as the secret of divine wisdom, queen of human and cosmic history, which God alone reveals when He wishes, to whom He wishes, thus confounding the wisdom of the wise and the intelligence of the intelligent.⁴⁶

On the other hand, it has been held by some⁴⁷ that Paul here is speaking of an esoteric wisdom which he communicated mystery cult-style

⁴⁴Bornkamm, IV, 819.

⁴⁵Brown, XXXIX, 437.

⁴⁶Louis Bouyer, Rite and Man, translated by M. Joseph Costelloe (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, c.1963), p. 143.

⁴⁷H. A. A. Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery-Religions (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), p. 130, says, for example, referring to 1 Cor. 2:6,7, "This passage certainly has a suggestion of the Mysteries; the Apostle speaks of a more advanced stage of Christian instruction which demands a higher grade of understanding."

to an elite group of Christian initiates. William Baird, in writing on the idea of wisdom in 1 Cor. 2:6, carefully weighs the evidence purported to support such a view, including the cultic use of the terms *τέλειος*, *μυστήριον*, and *ἀποκαλύπτω*, and concludes that

the wisdom of God is no esoteric doctrine, but the crucified Christ whom Paul proclaims. . . . The wisdom of God . . . is manifest in the proclamation of the crucified Christ who is the revelation and consummation of God's whole drama of salvation.⁴⁸

Bornkamm puts it this way:

The section I Cor. 2:6-16 . . . arouses at first the impression that Paul is presenting a mystery teaching which is designed only for the mature and which must be kept from the immature. . . . In fact, however, Paul never abandons the *λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ* which has been proclaimed to the whole community. Indeed, he is resisting the ecstatic demand of Corinthian mystery *gnosis* for a *σοφία* which will go beyond the message of the cross, and pointing to the wisdom of God which in this message is concealed from the world and its rulers, but revealed to those endowed with the Spirit of God. The addition *ἐν μυστηρίῳ* in 2:7 is the divine will to save fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ (1:24). Thus Paul could simply say *μυστήριον* for *θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν ἠποκεκρυμμένην*. The *μυστήριον* is God's pre-temporal counsel which is hidden from the world but revealed to the spiritual. This has been eschatologically fulfilled in the cross of the *κύριος τῆς δόξης*, and it carries with it the glorification of believers. As thus used, the

⁴⁸William Baird, "Among the Mature," *Interpretation*, XIII (1959), 429, 432. Brown, XXXIX, 438, commenting on *τέλειος*, says: "As the contrast with babes and children in 14:20 shows, *τέλειος* here means mature or adult. What Paul means, then, is that only the spiritually mature will understand the wisdom that he preaches. It is not a question of new or additional doctrine reserved for the few, but of a mystery which requires personal reflection accompanied by spiritual growth." Cf. also Lightfoot, pp. 173, 174; Godet, I, 132-135; Robertson and Plummer, pp. 35-39; and Moffatt, pp. 27, 28.

term displays evident dependence on the later Jewish apocalyptic concept, and distinction from that of the mystery cults and Gnosticism.⁴⁹

In addition to the parallels in Semitic literature to Paul's terminology and thought in 1 Corinthians 2 which we have already cited, the following should be noted. The idea that God's wisdom, which only He can reveal, is hidden from the world is evident in 1 QS 11:5-7:

from His marvellous mysteries is the light in my heart. My eyes have gazed on that which is eternal, on wisdom concealed from men . . . on a spring of glory (hidden) from the assembly of flesh. God has given them to His chosen ones as an everlasting possession. . . ."

And according to En. 48:6 and 62:7, the Son of Man, who Himself will in the last days pour forth all the secrets of wisdom and counsel (51:3), has been hidden from all eternity, but revealed by the Most High to the elect.

Furthermore, the idea of revealing the profound knowledge of a mystery only to those who are spiritually mature is reflected in such Qumran texts as 1 QS 4:22 and 1 QS 9:18, as well as in Sir. 4:18 and 4 Ezra 10:38; 12:36,37.⁵⁰ However, two distinct differences should

⁴⁹Bornkamm, IV, 819, 820. von Soden, XII, 192, summarizes: "Der wahren Weisheit Inhalt ist das *μυστήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ*, dass Jesus Christus, der Gekreuzigte, der Herr der Herrlichkeit sei." And Louis Bouyer, pp. 144, 145, puts it succinctly: "That *σοφία ἐν μυστηρίῳ* --wisdom in mystery--is Christ. It is the event of Christ given to the world, as the revealer and accomplisher of God's design. . . . It is not only what He has said, but what He has done, and above all His Cross. . . ." He, too, concludes that the Christian mystery "does not proceed from the mystery religions but springs from what is most original in Judaism."

⁵⁰Brown, XXXIX, 439.

be noted. First, these texts seem to attribute the revelation of divine mysteries to individuals on the basis of their upright conduct--as in Gnosticism where the mysteries are revealed to the *τέλειοι γνωστικοί*--whereas for Paul, as for Daniel, such revelation is a matter of God's gracious, sovereign choice (1 Cor. 1:27-30; 2:9,10,12,13; Dan. 2:27-30). Secondly, Jewish apocalypses speak of a real limitation of revelation. With Paul, however, "it is a question of growth of perception in doctrine already revealed. . . ." ⁵¹

One final parallel found in the Semitic background concerns the role of the Spirit in revealing the secret wisdom (1 Cor. 2:10,12). Dan. 2:9 comes to mind, where Nebuchadnezzar hails Daniel as one *ὃν ἐγὼ ἔγνων ὅτι πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἔχων ἐν σοὶ καὶ πάντων μυστηρίων οὐκ ἀδυνατεῖς*. . . . ⁵² In Sir. 48:24, 25 we read of Isaiah: "By a spirit of might he saw the future. . . . Unto eternity he declared things that shall be, and hidden things before they come to pass." And in 1 QH 12:11 the psalmist says that by the Holy Spirit which God had given him he faithfully listened to His marvellous mysteries. Brown, while admitting that it is difficult in each case to determine the exact meaning of the term "spirit," believes these examples "represent possible raw material for Pauline theological phraseology." ⁵³

⁵¹Ibid., XXXIX, 439, n. 1.

⁵²Theodotion's translation. It is interesting to note that Daniel exclaims that the Lord it is who *ἀνακαλύπτων τὰ βὰ θεῶν* " (LXX, Dan. 2:20-22); Paul says that the Spirit, through whom God reveals His secret wisdom, fathoms *τὰ βὰθ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ* (1 Cor. 2:10).

⁵³Brown, XXXIX, 440.

It would appear then that Paul's use of *μυστήριον* in 1 Cor. 2:1 and 7 proceeds not from the mystery religions nor from Greek philosophical speculation, but more likely from the Semitic world of words and thoughts, most notably that of Daniel.

In 1 Cor. 4:1, having pleaded for unity and humility in Christ, Paul says: "Regard us this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries (*ὡς κορόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ*)."

The exact meaning of the term *μυστήριον* here is not given. One writer suggests that the context "shows that Paul is strongly emphasizing the formal aspect of the word, implying all that God has revealed in Jesus Christ, the treasures of His grace."⁵⁴ It may be that the plural form (*μυστήρια*)⁵⁵ points to all the different designs included in the plan of salvation (*μυστήριον*).⁵⁶

However, the context does not seem to delineate the precise aspects of the mystery. Yet what Paul says in the verses immediately following this text is instructive. He states that human judgment of himself is not important, but God's coming judgment is; for He "will bring to light things hidden (*κεκρυμμένα*) in darkness and will reveal

⁵⁴F. W. Grosheide, Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in the New International Commentary on the NT, edited by Ned B. Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1953), p. 98.

⁵⁵The plural occurs only two other times in Paul, both in 1 Corinthians 13:2 and 14:2.

⁵⁶Godet, I, 205. He also suggests that the plural here is "connected with the idea of distribution associated with that of steward." Cf. also William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1957), p. 532.

the counsels (βουλαί) of the heart" (4:5).⁵⁷ According to von Soden, μυστήρια here then has clear eschatological meaning.⁵⁸ Be that as it may, the idea of God judging the secrets of man is found in Jewish thought. According to Sir. 17:15-20, 23:18-20, and 39:19, God sees and knows man's hidden thoughts and actions, and He will reveal his secrets (κευττά). And En. 38:3, 49:2 and 51:3 also speak of the coming judgment by the Righteous One who will reveal the secrets of men. Although Paul doesn't specifically relate the divine mysteries of 1 Cor. 4:1 to this eschatological motif, yet it is not a strange one to the Semitic thought of mystery, and it might have been in the back of Paul's mind. Anyway, the Jewish background is again evident.

One other parallel to Semitic thought here should be pointed out. The idea of a person, in this case the apostles, being entrusted with divine mysteries in order to dispense them to others, is reflected in 1 QH 2:13,14: "But to the elect of righteousness Thou has made me a banner, and a discerning interpreter of wonderful mysteries. . . ." Brown also finds paralleling the οἰκονόμοι of 1 Cor. 4:1 the "men in custody (𐤓𐤕 𐤍 𐤕𐤓𐤕) of Thy mysteries," in 1 Q 36:16.⁵⁹ And Kennedy feels that the role of these οἰκονόμοι in revealing the divine secrets is closer to that of the Old Testament

⁵⁷Brown, XXXIX, 441, calls attention to the parallelism of βουλαί and κευττά, remembering that 𐤕𐤓𐤕, "secret counsels," is translated by βουλαί in the LXX.

⁵⁸von Soden, XII, 192.

⁵⁹Brown, XXXIX, 441.

prophets who were entrusted with the mysteries of the divine assembly (תִּשְׁבּוּ), than that of the initiating priests of the mystery cults.⁶⁰

In 1 Cor. 13:2 Paul includes knowledge of all mysteries among those gifts of the Spirit which are not only unimportant, but absolutely nothing--apart from the greatest gift of all, that of love: "Even if I have the gift of prophecy and am acquainted with all the mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all the faith it takes to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." Once again there is no indication of the precise content of these mysteries. Perhaps the expression, τὰ μυστήρια πάντα, refers to the sum total of divinely revealed secrets, that is, to the entire content of the Christian revelation.⁶¹ At any rate, to penetrate all the mysteries of God is "the special spiritual gift of the prophet."⁶² This close association of "all the mysteries" with prophecy recalls to mind 1 QpHab. 7:4,5 which states that God revealed to the Teacher of Righteousness "all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets" (compare Amos 3:8: God reveals "His secret to His servants the Prophets"). The phrase "all the secrets" also occurs in En. 49:2 and 51:3 where the Elect One is said to be "mighty in all the secrets of righteousness" and will on Judgment Day "pour forth all the secrets of wisdom and counsel."⁶³

⁶⁰Kennedy, p. 125.

⁶¹Furley, VIII, 186.

⁶²Bornkamm, IV, 822.

⁶³Brown, XXXIX, 441, builds a creditable case for a non-literal use of the expression "all the mysteries" in Semitic literature

In 1 Cor. 14:2 we find another reference to *μυστήριον*. Paul, in evaluating the gifts of the Spirit, places prophecy above speaking in a tongue: "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands him, but under the influence of the Spirit he speaks mysteries." The clause *πνεύματος δὲ ἀλλεὶ μυστήρια* is difficult. If *δὲ* is explanatory⁶⁴ then the sense would be: "no one understands him, because he speaks mysteriously under the influence of the Spirit."⁶⁵ If, on the other hand, *δὲ* is adversative⁶⁶ the clause would stress the importance of the message: "for no one understands him, but (even though) he speaks mysteries under the influence of the Spirit."⁶⁷ In either case,

(En. 41:1; 52:2; 61:5; 63:3; 68:5; 71:4; Sir. 43:32), so that it would refer to the depth of knowledge of the mysteries, and not an absolute knowledge. "Thus," concludes Brown, "a man could say that God had shown him all the mysteries; and yet, still recognize that his knowledge is imperfect--something not very far from Paul's idea" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:9).

⁶⁴Cf. Robertson and Plummer, p. 306.

⁶⁵Thus Clarence T. Craig, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1953) X, 198, states that the mysteries are "secrets in the sense that the syllables in which they are expressed are unintelligible."

⁶⁶Cf. Godet, II, 266. He renders: "But, far from being understood, he speaks mysteries."

⁶⁷Brown, XXXIX, 443, holds that the expression "by the spirit" makes the latter interpretation preferable. We take *πνεύματος* (cf. Gal. 3:3; 5:15,16,18,25) as dative of instrument and refer it to the Spirit of God. Cf. Arndt and Gingrich, p. 684. Also Charles Hodge, An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1857), p. 279. For the view that *πνεῦμα* here refers to the human spirit, cf. Ellicott, p. 260; Godet, II, 206; Grosheide, p. 318; and Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the

the meaning of *μυστήρια* here is not indicated and we can find no parallels in the Semitic background except the association of the Spirit with the mysteries in Dan. 2:9, Sir. 48:24,25 and 1 QH 12:11.⁶⁸

Finally, *μυστήριον* occurs in 1 Cor. 15:51, where Paul, having just explained that perishable flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, calls attention to the change that Christians will experience at the parousia:

Look, this is a mystery I am telling you: We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised immortal, and we shall be changed (15:51, 52).

In spite of a hard textual problem,⁶⁹ the *μυστήριον* here seems clear. It refers to the coming event when all Christians

Corinthians in The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, edited by R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1958).VII, 191.

⁶⁸Supra, p. 85.

⁶⁹The problem arises from the position of the negative. As a rule the negative stands before that which is to be negated, in this case, the verb. Thus *πάντες οὐ κολληθήσόμεθα* would say, "We all shall not die," meaning, "None of us shall die." Apparently the *πάντες οὐ* should be taken in the sense of *οὐ πάντες* ("not all," i.e., "some"). Such an exception to the rule is found also in classical Greek. Cf. Blass and Debrunner, p. 224. Godet, I, 437, suggests that in the N.T., as in the LXX, the position of the *οὐ* is not rigorously observed, "a fact arising from the well-known Hebrew usage of connecting with the person the negative relating to the verb" (cf. Num. 23:13). And Robertson and Plummer, p. 376, hold that "the desired antithesis requires that both clauses should begin with *πάντες*; hence *πάντες οὐ* in the first clause, not *οὐ πάντες*. Thus understood, the text, supported by B E D L P the Syriac and Egyptian translations, makes perfectly good sense." The difficulty, however, has given rise to a variety of readings in the MSS and versions: A C F G have *πάντες κολληθήσόμεθα, οὐ πάντες δὲ ἀλλὰ ἡσόμεθα*; D the Vulgate and some old Latin MSS and Marcion have *πάντες ἀνδραστεθήσόμεθα, οὐ πάντες δὲ ἀλλὰ ἡσόμεθα*. These and

will be changed in such a way that they can enter eternal life. This mystery is part of God's great plan of salvation--a climactic part, indeed. It is a mystery because "it is enclosed in God's counsel and will be fulfilled with divine necessity in a way which is beyond human calculation or comprehension."⁷⁰ Yet once again the mystery is revealed. Paul calls special attention to it (*ἡ τοῦ μυστηρίου* *ὁμῶς λέγω*). One may note a similar passage in 1 Thess. 4:15 where the apostle introduces the thought that those who are alive at the parousia will not go ahead of those who have died, with the words, *Τοῦτο γὰρ ὁμῶς λέγομεν ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου* . . . That which has been revealed to him by divine revelation and, which he could know in no other way, he openly proclaims. Later we shall take a closer look at the relationship between the Pauline mystery and revelation.

Although Paul's use of mystery here finds no exact parallel in the Semitic background, yet eschatological mysteries are by no means absent from that background. Robinson, for example, calls attention to a similar use of the word in the latter part of Enoch.⁷¹ Answering the claim that the lot of the righteous after death is no different than that of the wicked, Enoch relates a mystery: "all goodness and joy and glory are prepared for . . . those who have died in

other less important variations are probably scribal attempts to escape making Paul say that the Christians of that generation were not to die. Cf. Hodge, p. 354.

⁷⁰Bornkamm, IV, 823.

⁷¹Robinson, p. 238.

righteousness. . . . your lot is abundantly beyond the lot of the living" (En. 103:2,3).⁷² In a similar vein, Wisd. 2:22 speaks of the mysteries of God which the wicked do not know; for they believe that the life of the righteous ends with death. Apparently, then, these mysteries refer to God's gracious plans for the righteous in eternity.⁷³

"Strongly eschatological,"⁷⁴ too, is the Pauline *μυστήριον* in Rom. 11:25:

Lest you be wise in your own estimation, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery: a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the full number of the Gentiles comes in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. . . . (11:25,26).

Bornkamm comments:

Putting the historical fact of the obduracy of Israel into the context of a *μυστήριον*, Paul discloses the eschatological significance of this event (*ἀλλ' οὐ . . . σωθήσεται*, 25 f.). In the present *πρώτως* there is intimated in hidden form the entrance of the *πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν* into salvation history, and hence the final deliverance of Israel too.⁷⁵

Certainly the mystery here is closely associated with God's hidden plan revealed now by Him (Paul disclaims human wisdom and personal cleverness) for guiding history toward His redemptive purposes.⁷⁶

⁷²In En. 38:3 "the secrets of the righteous" might refer to the secret blessings of the righteous which, though still hidden, shall be revealed at the final judgment.

⁷³Still another example of mystery used with reference to the future destiny of the elect is En. 61:1-5.

⁷⁴von Soden, XII, 193.

⁷⁵Bornkamm, IV, 822.

⁷⁶William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), p. 334, comment concerning this mystery: "Here it is used in a wide sense of the whole plan or scheme of redemption as revealed to St. Paul, by which Jews

Specifically the mystery includes three aspects: the partial and temporary rejection of Israel, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the ultimate destiny of salvation for "all Israel." The meaning of the expression, $\pi\alpha\varsigma \text{ } \iota\sigma\epsilon\alpha\iota\acute{\iota}\lambda$, unique in Pauline writings, is most difficult to determine. Most exegetes take it to mean the entire nation of Israel, but not necessarily including every individual Jew.⁷⁷ Others, however--notwithstanding Stifler's irresponsible statement that "the illogical notion that 'Israel' here is the spiritual Israel is no longer held"⁷⁸--interpret "all Israel" as the whole people of God, including both Jews and Gentiles.⁷⁹ This latter view, which

and Gentiles alike are to be included in the Divine Kingdom, and all things are working up, although in ways unseen and unknown, to that end."

⁷⁷Cf. Sanday and Headlam, pp. 335, 336; C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1957), pp. 223, 224; F. Godet, Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, translated by A. Cusin (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1883), p. 411; Handley C. G. Moule, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (London: George Bell and Sons, 1905), p. 258; F. F. Bruce, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, in The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, edited by R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963) VI, 220-222; Walter Lüthi, The Letter to the Romans, translated by Kurt Schoenenberger (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961), p. 155; Howard Rhys, The Epistle to the Romans (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), pp. 145, 146; and John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans, in The New International Commentary on the New Testament, edited by F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), II, 96, 98.

⁷⁸James M. Stifler, The Epistle to the Romans (Chicago: Moody Press, c.1960), p. 196.

⁷⁹For a very helpful defense of this view, cf. Martin H. Franzmann, Romans, in the Concordia Commentary, edited by Walter J. Bartling and Albert E. Glock (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1968), pp. 207-212. Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, translated by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 415, 416, holds this position, too. A less defensible position, that "all

I favor, does allow *μυστηριον* here to parallel the associations of comprehensiveness and universality which the term has, for example, in Dan. 2:28-45, and frequently elsewhere in Paul (Rom. 16:25,26; 1 Cor. 15:51; Eph. 1:9,10; 3:3-6,8-10; Col. 1:26-28; 1 Tim. 3:16).⁸⁰ In either case, the emphasis in this Pauline *μυστηριον* seems to be on the salvation of the Jews, whereas elsewhere, as we shall see, the conversion of the Gentiles receives major attention. Kennedy sums up the mystery this way:

Paul here deals with what has been for him a serious problem, the rejection of the Gospel by the chosen people, and its glad acceptance by the heathen. The one explanation he can find is a secret purpose of God whereby the ingathering of the Gentiles shall finally prove a compelling force to attract Israel also.⁸¹

Although this mystery has no precise parallel in Jewish thought,⁸² yet some similarity can be pointed out. In 4 Ezra 10:38-55 one of the many mysteries revealed to Ezra concerns the restoration of the suffering woman who is identified as Zion, now rejected,

Israel" refers to the spiritual Jews (not including the Gentiles) is held by F. W. Stellhorn, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1918), pp. 218, 221. Luther, while at first taking the term to mean the Jewish nation as a whole, later identified "all Israel" with the number of the elect among the Jews. Cf. Martin Luther, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, translated by J. T. Mueller (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1954), pp. 145,146.

⁸⁰Cf. Franzmann, Romans, p. 211.

⁸¹Kennedy, pp. 124,125.

⁸²In fact, Coppens, p. 142, who takes "all Israel" as the entire nation of Israel, finds at Qumran just the opposite notion to the Pauline mystery here. There "salvation will belong immediately to Israel, but will be reserved finally to that portion of the elect represented by the community of the Desert of Judah."

but eventually possessing brilliant glory and majestic beauty.

The idea of apparent rejection on an individual scale is also reflected in 1 QH 9:23-24, where the psalmist is assured that the rebuke which God's mysterious wisdom presently gives him will some day be a cause of joy.⁸³

The other occurrence of mystery in Romans is in the concluding doxology:

To the One who has the power to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ,⁸⁴ according to the revelation of the mystery concealed for long ages, but now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring them to the obedience of faith--to God who alone is wise, through Jesus Christ, be the glory for evermore! Amen. (16:25-26).

It is difficult to determine whether the phrase *κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν μυστηρίου* goes with *σπείρειν* and is thus coordinate with the preceding clause (*κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου καὶ τὸ κήρυμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*), or whether it is intended to be subordinate to and descriptive of *κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου . . . Χριστοῦ*. In either case, we clearly have here an even closer association of the Pauline *μυστήριον* with the *κήρυμα* than we saw in 1 Cor. 1:2,7. Brown puts it this way:

⁸³Sanday and Headlam, pp. 336-337, point out that a universal restoration of Israel was part of the current Jewish expectation. They also note that the belief in the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles, while rejected by later Judaism, was still held by much of Judaism of Paul's day.

⁸⁴I take *τὸ κήρυμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* as objective genitive. Cf. Arndt and Gingrich, p. 432. On the other hand, Franzmann, *Romans*, p. 282, seems to take it as a subjective genitive.

the revelation of the mystery is in parallelism with the preaching of Christ. . . . In other words, for Paul, Christ's life and role in the salvation of men are the revelation of God's mysterious plan hidden from ages past. Thus Romans supplies the first example of the equation of the *μυστήριον* and Christ. . . .⁸⁵

It is in Christ, then, that God in His appointed time (*κατ' ἐπιστάτην τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ*) graciously reveals His *μυστήριον*. The association of revelation with *μυστήριον*, a concept that "belongs constitutively to the term"⁸⁶ is particularly striking in this text (*ἀποκάλυψιν . . . φανερωθέντος . . . γνωρισθέντος*).

No passage in Paul's epistles more than this one places in focus the distinction between mystery as something esoteric and belonging only to the elite, on the one hand, and the Pauline conception, on the other. The features of this mystery as revealed set this distinction in the sharpest relief: (1) it is made known to all nations; (2) it is made known through Scriptures which are the property of all; (3) it is made known to all by God's command; (4) it is revealed to the end of bringing all to the obedience of faith.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Brown, XXXIX, p. 447. Similarly, Coppens, p. 142, says: "'The revelation of the mystery' appears to be identified with the kerygma of the 'gospel,' of which Christ is the principle, central, and formal object. . . . The mystery is . . . the content of the gospels, and consequently, by way of induction, Christ appears for the first time in its perspective."

⁸⁶Bornkamm, IV, 820. His statement that "*μυστήριον* is mostly used with terms for revelation" is clearly documented: *ἀποκάλυψις*, Rom. 16:25, Eph. 3:3; *ἀποκαλύπτειν*, 1 Cor. 2:10, Eph. 3:5; *γνωρίζειν*, Rom. 16:26, Eph. 1:9; 3:3,5, Col. 1:27; *φανεροῦν*, Rom. 16:26; Col. 1:26. Furthermore, in apostolic preaching the mystery is revealed: *καταγγέλλειν*, 1 Cor. 2:1; *ἀγγεῖν*, 1 Cor. 2:7; Col. 4:3; *εὐαγγελίσασθαι*, Eph. 3:8; *φωτίσαι*, Eph. 3:9; *φανεροῦν*, Col. 4:4; *γνωρίζειν τὸ μυστήριον*, Eph. 6:19; *καταγγέλλειν* includes both *νοῦθετεῖν* and *διδάσκειν*, Col. 1:28; the apostles are *οἰκονόμοι μυστηρίων θεοῦ*, 1 Cor. 4:1.

⁸⁷Murray, II, 243, n. 21.

This revelatory counterpart of *μυστήριον* accords well with similar usage in the LXX and Apocrypha.⁸⁸

One particular aspect of the revelation of *μυστήριον* that is especially noteworthy here concerns the role of the prophetic writings (*ῥα τὰ γεὰ φῶν προφητικῶν*). These Old Testament Scriptures⁸⁹ are interpretive witnesses to what the eternal God has revealed in Christ (Rom. 3:21). They help to make known the mystery because they indicate that God had always intended the salvation of the Gentiles (compare Rom. 15:9-12).⁹⁰

Part of the Semitic background of this Pauline *μυστήριον* might lie in the prophet's role as a witness in the heavenly council (*τῶ*) and a proclaimer of the heavenly secrets there disclosed.⁹¹ At any rate, in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha the prophets are thought of as conveyers of mysteries of God. According to Sir.

⁸⁸Robinson, pp. 235-236, notes from his study of *μυστήριον* in the Apocrypha, LXX, and other Greek translations of the O.T. that "its natural counterpart is found in words like ἀποκαλύπτειν and ἀποκάλυψις"

⁸⁹Contrary to those who contend that the prophetic writings refer to Paul's own letters and those of fellow apostles (cf. Stifler, p. 254-255; also Godet, *Romans*, pp. 504-506), it seems best to take these as the O.T. prophetic Scriptures which Paul cites frequently in his proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Cf. Rhys, p. 205; Murray, II, 242; and Bruce, VI, 283. Sanday and Headlam, p. 434, comment: "The unity of the Old and New Testaments, the fact that Christ had come in accordance with the Scriptures (Rom. 1:1,2), that the new method of salvation although apart from the law, was witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets (Rom. 3:21), the constant allusion especially in chapters ix-xi to the O.T. Scriptures--all these are summed up in the phrase ῥα τὰ γεὰ φῶν προφητικῶν."

⁹⁰Brown, XXXIX, 448.

⁹¹*Supra*, p. 38.

48:24-25, Isaiah saw the future and "declared . . . hidden things before they came to pass." And 4 Ezra 14:5 states that God showed Moses the secrets of the times and the end of the seasons. Actually the pseudepigraphical apocalypses had a "quasi-prophetic function" of preserving the mysteries of God for later generations (En. 104:10-12; 4 Ezra 12:36-37)⁹²--although it should be pointed out that these mysteries were not to be published openly to all (compare 4 Ezra 14:6,26). Finally, 1 QpHab. 7:1-5 indicates that, while not revealing to Habakkuk the fulfillment of the end, God did reveal "all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets" to the Teacher of Righteousness. This seems somewhat similar to Paul's thought here that God's mysterious, long hidden plan is now, in the time of fulfillment, at last being made known through these very prophetic writings (compare 1 Peter 1:10-12).

We have already noted, in our discussion of $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\omicron\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ in 1 Cor. 2:7, the Semitic background for the close association of divine mystery and divine wisdom.⁹³ In addition, here in Paul's concluding doxology, in which he adores the only God whose wisdom guides all history toward His redemptive goal, are there not shades of Daniel's magnificent doxology?

Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and mysterious things. . . . (Dan. 2:20-22, RSV).

⁹²Brown, XXXIX, 448.

⁹³Supra, p. 82.

Turning to Colossians, we find four references to mystery, two of which occur in 1:26,27. Having stated that he is suffering for the church, Paul continues:

I became its servant by virtue of the task God gave me for you, the task to bring the word of God to completion, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now disclosed to His Saints, to whom God willed to make known how rich and glorious among the Gentiles this mystery is, namely, Christ in you, the hope of glory. He it is whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we might present every one as a mature person in Christ (1:25-28).

We have already encountered several elements of the Pauline

μυστήριον that appear here: the role Paul plays as steward (κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν) in fulfilling his God-given task of proclaiming the mystery (1 Col. 4:1); the close association of the mystery with λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ (Rom. 16:25); the contrast between the mystery once hidden (ἀποκεκρυμμένον), but now disclosed (ἐφανερώθη) (1 Cor. 2:7; Rom. 16:25); the free, gracious choice of God (ἠθέλησεν δὲ Θεός) in making known the mystery (1 Cor. 2:10; Rom. 16:26); the association of the mystery specifically with the Gentiles (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) (Rom. 16:25); the emphasis of wisdom (ἐν πᾶσι σοφίᾳ) in connection with the mystery (1 Cor. 2:6,7; Rom. 16:27); and the association of the mystery with the spiritually mature (τέλειος) (1 Cor. 2:6).

The mystery here, however, is even more specifically identified with Christ.⁹⁴ The mystery is $\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma \ \acute{\epsilon}\nu \ \delta\mu\acute{\omega}\nu$ ⁹⁵ (Col.

⁹⁴F. F. Bruce comments on this text: "Christ Himself is the centre and circumference of this mystery; by His death and exaltation He has brought it to accomplishment--in measure now, and in perfection hereafter." Cf. E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 219. Brown, XXIX, 71, suggests that Paul wants the Colossians who apparently were placing undue importance on the role of angels "to realize that in the divine mystery Christ alone suffices to give them the hope of glory."

⁹⁵The preceding relative $\acute{\delta}\varsigma$ (masculine because its gender has been assimilated to the predicate, $\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$), seems preferable to $\acute{\delta}$, a reading supported by p⁴⁶ B A G, the Latin tradition, and Westcott and Hort, and possibly suggested by the neuter gender of the preceding noun. Although, as Blass and Debrunner, p. 73, point out, "in explanatory phrases Koine employs the neuter $\acute{\delta}' \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\epsilon\nu$. . . without reference to the gender of the word explained or to that of the word which explains. . . ." In either case, we take the antecedent of $\acute{\delta}\varsigma$ ($\acute{\delta}$) to be $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\rho\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$, which is the dominant idea in the context (cf. v. 26; 2:2). Cf. T. K. Abbott, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1897), pp. 234-235. Cf. also J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (London: Macmillan and Company, 1879), p. 169. On the other hand, John Eadie, A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1884), pp. 94-95, holds that the antecedent is the complex idea of the entire clause--Christ in His gracious relation to the Gentile world.

1:27), that is, Christ in you⁹⁶ (Gentiles).⁹⁷ This mystical mystery is also eschatological; for he who is in Christ (verse 28) has a share in the eschatological glory (ὁ ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης, verse 27; compare 1 Cor. 2:7).⁹⁸ Hans von Soden remarks:

Als Inhalt des *μυστηρίου* . . . erscheint widerum Christus in eschatologischer Absicht. Er ist ἐλπίς τῆς δόξης (1:27), und ihn zu erkennen macht den Menschen τέλειος, so dass er das Gericht der Parusie nicht zu fürchten hat (1:28; vgl. 1:22).⁹⁹

⁹⁶It is possible, of course, to take *χριστός ἐν ὑμῖν* as "Christ among you." Abbott, p. 235, holds that the parallelism with *ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν* favors this interpretation. Cf. also S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "Studies in the Epistle to the Colossians: V. The Minister of the Mystery," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, CXIX (1962), 232. However, the interpretation "in you" is perhaps the more probable one. Similar usage is found elsewhere in Paul (cf. Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17). Cf. Lightfoot, *Colossians and Philemon*, p. 169. E. F. Scott, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, in *The Moffatt New Testament Commentary* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.) XI, 32, argues that since Paul has already identified the word of God as the mystery, he must be speaking here not merely of the diffusion of the gospel but of its inner content, and therefore the phrase should be understood in its mystical sense. And Eadie, p. 95, believes that "the meaning 'in you' is virtually implied; for Christ, as the hope of glory, was not contemplated merely, but possessed. He was not merely before them to be beheld, but in them to be felt."

⁹⁷We see no valid reason to distinguish as sharply as Mitton, pp. 88-89, does between Paul's use of *μυστήριον* in Colossians and in Ephesians. While it is true that the mystery in Ephesians strongly stresses the incorporation of the Gentiles into the Body of Christ, such a thought is not absent in Colossians, as is evident from this text under consideration. And although Colossians develops at some length the mystical union of believers with Christ, yet the mystery of this union is also contemplated in Ephesians, where the teaching of the *πλήρωμα* has a very personal ring. Cf. Coppens, p. 151. Cf. also Simpson and Bruce, pp. 218-219.

⁹⁸Cf. L. Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul*, translated by Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), p. 405.

⁹⁹von Soden, p. 193.

The claim that Paul in this text is mimicking the thought of the mystery cults is clearly unwarranted. The mystery he proclaims is not an esoteric set of doctrines reserved for a few initiates. Further, it is the person of Christ¹⁰⁰ announced to every man (note the triple $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha \delta\acute{\iota}\nu\theta\epsilon\omega\pi\iota\omicron\nu$ in verse 28) in all wisdom (compare Col. 2:3: in Christ are hidden $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma \omicron\varsigma \theta\eta\sigma\alpha\nu\epsilon\omicron\iota \tau\eta\varsigma \sigma\omicron\phi\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$).¹⁰¹ Even Lightfoot's hypothesis that Paul's use of $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\omicron\nu$, a "term borrowed from the ancient mysteries," involves an "intentional paradox"¹⁰² is highly dubious in view of numerous verbal and conceptual parallels in pre-Christian Semitic writings to the $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\epsilon\omicron\nu$ of Col. 1:26,27.¹⁰³ Some of these we have already considered in connection with similar language and thought in other Pauline mystery passages.

Among the new aspects of the mystery in this passage, as well as in the other Colossian mystery texts, is Paul's concentration of the mystery in the person of Christ, the Savior of mankind. There

¹⁰⁰The masculine relative pronoun $\omicron\nu$ in v. 28 stresses the personal character of the mystery.

¹⁰¹Cf. Scott, XI, 32-33. Scott here also argues against the view that when Paul uses $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ he is using the technical mystery term for an initiate. Cf. also Abbott, p. 236, and Coppens, pp. 155-156.

¹⁰²Lightfoot, Colossians and Philemon, p. 168. Cf. also Bruce, pp. 170-171, who speaks of Paul's use of technical terms of his pagan opponents in a disinfected sense. For counter-arguments, cf. Abbott, pp. 233-234.

¹⁰³For a partial listing of Qumran mystery parallels to the Captivity Letters, cf. Coppens, p. 152.

is no exact parallel to this mystery par excellence in Jewish writings.¹⁰⁴ Yet Brown calls attention to something similar in En.

48:6; 51:3; and 62:7. There

The Elect one, the Son of Man, the light of the nations (notice that the Gentiles are involved as with Paul), was chosen and hidden in God's presence before creation (Paul's mystery of Christ was hidden from ages past). But in the day of the judgment, God shall reveal him to the elect (Paul: "to the saints"). . . . As a result there ensues the blessedness of the just (Paul's hope of glory). Of course, there is no suggestion that En's Elect One, often considered a messianic figure, saves men through personal salvific activity, but the similarity of vocabulary and concept is still interesting.¹⁰⁵

And while this mystery of Christ is for Paul "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27), God's marvelous mysteries in 1 QS 11:5-8 are "a spring of glory" and those to whom God graciously reveals His mysteries shall rejoice at the time of His glory (1 QH 12:20-24).¹⁰⁶

A second reference to mystery follows quickly in Col. 2:2, where Paul says that he works hard for the Colossians and other Christians

¹⁰⁴Concerning the Qumran writings, Coppens, p. 151, says that "nothing, absolutely nothing, at Qumran evokes the mystery of the glorious Christ, nor the mystery of Christ which we have called mystical."

¹⁰⁵Raymond E. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (II)," *Biblica*, XL (January 1959), 73. Coppens, p. 151, also cites 1 QH 5:25 and 8:10-11, where the psalmist is described as the bearer of a mystery hidden and sealed in his person.

¹⁰⁶Cf. also 1 QH 13:13,14: "And Thou hast (appointed) all these things in the mysteries of Thy wisdom to make known Thy glory (to all)." Bornkamm, IV, 822, rightly notes that "the coming glorification of believers is only intimated in the *μυστηριον*. The riches of glory are already included in it, but they are still included in it, Christ being the 'hope' of glory in whom the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are still concealed, Col. 2:3. Hence the revealed mystery still conceals the final consummation. . . . *δοξα* is only in the concealment of *θελουσης*, Col. 1:24-25; Eph. 3:13."

that their hearts might take courage and be unified in love, and come to all the riches of assurance that understanding brings, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The phrase which we have rendered "the mystery of God, which is Christ," is problematic textually and grammatically. Scott is no doubt right when he remarks that "there are few places in the New Testament where the manuscripts differ so widely as in these few words."¹⁰⁷ Probably best of the some dozen variant readings is the one adopted by Nestle, τοῦ θεοῦ χριστοῦ; while not having the strongest external support (p⁴⁶ B Hilary), it is one of the shortest readings and does tend to explain the other readings.¹⁰⁸ And χριστοῦ should be taken in apposition to μυστηρίου;¹⁰⁹ this agrees well with Paul's expression in 1:27. The mystery here, then, is once more Christ, not "static," but "the salvific Christ, the Redeemer of Jew and Gentile,"¹¹⁰ as the wider context indicates. Coppins feels that the concise formula here indicates "the historical Christ," but the historical Christ as glorified through His resurrection and heavenly exaltation. And since all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him, treasures which Judaism and Paul himself

¹⁰⁷Scott, XI, 36.

¹⁰⁸For a helpful discussion of this, cf. Lightfoot, Colossians and Philemon, pp. 172-173.

¹⁰⁹Less likely are the suggestions that χριστοῦ is dependent on θεοῦ or in apposition to θεοῦ, neither of which expression is found elsewhere in Paul. Cf. Lightfoot, Colossians and Philemon, p. 173. Also T. Norton Sterrett, "The Mystery of God, Even Christ," Bibliotheca Sacra, XCV (1938), 161. For a somewhat different view, cf. Abbott, pp. 239-241.

¹¹⁰Brown, XL, 72.

elsewhere (for example, Rom. 11:33-36) attribute to God, he concludes that "the mystery, then, is concretely the divine pleroma incarnated in Christ."¹¹¹

Before noting Semitic antecedents to this Pauline mystery, we draw attention to a fundamental difference. Paul here and elsewhere associates knowledge of the mystery with ἀγάπην, and, in fact, gives it primacy. We fail to find this emphasis in the Jewish writings. Yet there are frequent parallels, especially in vocabulary, between this mystery and Semitic literature. Paul speaks here of knowledge of the mystery of God (Col. 2:2); similarly references to knowledge of the marvelous mysteries of God occur frequently at Qumran (1 QH 2:13; 4:27-28; 7:27; 11:9; 12:13). And while Qumran speaks of mysteries of divine wisdom (1 QH 12:13; 13:13) and Enoch relates that the Elect One shall pour forth all the secrets of wisdom and counsel (En. 51:3), Paul states that the mystery of Christ contains all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The expression, θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας, occurs in Sir. 1:25 (compare Sir. 20:30). But more instructive is the parallel to En. 46:3. There the Son of Man reveals "all the treasures of that which is hidden." Bogdasavich, after surveying the ideas of μυστηριον, σοφία, σύνεσις, and θησαυροὶ ἀπόκρυφους in such passages as Prov. 2:4-7; 3:14-20; 8:21; Sir. 1:6; 1:25; 20:30; Wis. 6:22; and Job 28:12-22, concludes that "Paul seems to have summarized them in this one passage

¹¹¹Coppens, p. 148.

(Col. 2:2-3) and applied them to Christ. It seems hard," he adds, "to deny the validity of P. Feuillet's argument that St. Paul had the wisdom literature in mind when he wrote this."¹¹² At any rate, the strains of both wisdom and apocalyptic¹¹³ thought would appear to make unnecessary any attempt to find in this Pauline mystery text a borrowing from the language of the mystery cults.

In Col. 4:3 there is a final reference to *μυστήριον*.

Paul asks the Colossians to:

pray also for us, that God might give us opportunity to proclaim the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, that I might make it clear, as I ought to.

Here once again the mystery is closely related to the word (*λόγος*). The mystery of Christ is the object of the apostolic proclamation and that proclamation puts the mystery into effect (*ἀπαγγέλλει* is probably the infinitive of result).¹¹⁴ Although Lightfoot believes that the mystery here is specifically "the doctrine of the free admission of the Gentiles,"¹¹⁵ in view of the two previous mystery passages (1:26,27; 2:2), it seems best to take *τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ*

¹¹²M. Bogdasavich, "The Idea of Pleroma in the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians," The Downside Review, LXXXIII (1965), 122-123.

¹¹³Cerfaux, p. 524, remarks: "The influence of the apocalyptic current is felt in two main spheres, firstly when Paul, at the beginning of his career, visualizes Christ as risen from the dead and coming again in glory; secondly, when he opposes the syncretism of the Colossians."

¹¹⁴Cf. Brown, XL, 73. Bornkamm, IV, 821, states that "proclamation does not merely give information about the effected revelation of the *μυστήριον* of God (or Christ, Col. 2:2; 4:3) but itself belongs to the event of the *μυστήριον* and the occurrence of revelation."

¹¹⁵Lightfoot, Colossians and Philemon, p. 231. Cf. also Eadie, p. 271.

Χελοσ τοῦ in the sense of God's redemptive plan to save men (whether Jew or Gentile) in Christ,¹¹⁶ Since we have already discussed possible Jewish parallels to these ideas of mystery, we will move on to the mystery passages in Ephesians.

The first reference to *μυστήριον* in Ephesians, where the term occurs six times in all, is in 1:9. Here Paul blesses the God of blessing who has eternally elected us in Christ and has in Him redeemed and forgiven us:

according to the riches of His grace which He has lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight in that He has made known to us the mystery of His will (*τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ*), according to His good will and pleasure which He planned in Him (Christ), to be put into effect in the fulness of time, namely, to bring all things together in Christ, the things in heaven and the things on earth (1:7-10).

Once more there are several ideas we have already encountered. As the revelation of the mystery is a matter of God's free, gracious choice (1 Cor. 2:7; Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:27), so here the making known of the mystery of His will is a manifestation of the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7). Again wisdom is associated with the revelation of the mystery (Eph. 1:8; cf. 1 Cor. 2:7; Rom. 16:27; Col. 1:28; 2:3).¹¹⁷ The concept of *οἰκονομία* appears again in connection with the mystery, although here (Eph. 1:10) it has the meaning of "dispensation" or "working out," whereas in Col. 1:25 it referred

¹¹⁶Cf. Scott, XI, 89. He translates the phrase as "the mystery consisting in Christ." Cf. also Mitton, p. 89.

¹¹⁷Robinson, p. 30, comments: "With St. Paul wisdom belongs especially to the region of the mystery and its revelation."

to the office or task of a steward.¹¹⁸ And while in Col. 1:27 the mystery was "Christ in you (Gentiles), the hope of glory," here in the immediate context of the mystery Paul suggests that the ultimate end of the calling of the Gentiles is to praise God's glory (1:14; compare verse 12).

What precisely is the Pauline *μυστήριον* here? It is the "benevolent plan of God centering in Christ . . . to be put into effect in the fullness of the times, namely, to gather up into one all things in Christ as the common Head."¹¹⁹ According to Trinidad, this "bringing together all things in Christ" is well explained in the immediate context:

We received all our spiritual blessings in Christ (v. 3). We were foreordained unto adoption as through Christ (v. 5). God freely bestowed His grace on us in the Beloved (v. 7). And all this took place in conformity with the plan contained in the mystery (v. 9). So that 'the mystery' has to do with our getting all our spiritual blessings through Christ and in Christ, through our union with Christ.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸For a good summary of the various meanings of *οἰκονομία*, cf. Francis W. Beare, The Epistle to the Ephesians, in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1953) X, 619.

¹¹⁹Victor A. Bartling, "The Church in God's Eternal Plan," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXVI (1965), 202. For a good discussion of the possible meaning of the verb here, *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι* (epexegetic infinitive), cf. John T. Trinidad, "The Mystery Hidden in God," Biblica, XXXI (1950), 19; G. G. Findlay, The Epistle to the Ephesians, in The Expositor's Bible, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1903) XL, 47-48; and Lightfoot, Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, 321-322.

¹²⁰Trinidad, XXXI, 19-20.

And yet the mystery affects more than humanity; for the "all things" (1:10) includes also those in heaven (τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς).¹²¹

What this means may be indicated in the wider context. In 1:20,21 Paul says Christ is ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος. And according to 6:12, these ἀρχαὶ and ἐξουσίαι are themselves in heavenly places (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις).

Brown, with some merit, concludes that

Paul seems to have in mind the view that before the coming of Christ, men were subject to the angels, good and bad. But now all things are subject to Christ, even the angels. Some of these angelic powers still strive for domination, and struggle against the Church (Eph. 6:12); but the fact that Christ has been made head over them for the Church (1:22) guarantees the Church's victory. In this interpretation, the mystery of the divine will in Eph. 1:9-10 is a picture of the final stage of the divine οἰκονομία: the fulness of time where men on earth and the angels are all subject to Christ. From the eternal point of view, this mystery of complete subjection to Christ exists already, for Christ has come and evil is vanquished; from the temporal view, Paul and the Christians are locked in struggle with the forces of evil to bring about the perfect headship of Christ.¹²²

Brown further contends that this cosmic, eschatological interpretation of the Pauline mystery here is not out of harmony with his concept of mystery elsewhere, both in his earlier writings (compare

¹²¹We strongly disavow any thought of universalism. There is no warrant for that here or anywhere else in Scripture. Cf. Bartling, XXXVI, 203.

¹²²Brown, XL, 77. This double perspective of the mystery, the temporal and the eternal, is found also in Jewish apocalyptic. Enoch, for instance, while recognizing that the Christian community still struggles against the forces of evil (e.g., En. 56:5-7), holds that the Elect One is superior to the angelic hosts and will judge them (En. 61:8-10).

the eschatological emphasis of the mystery in 2 Thess. 2:7 and 1 Cor. 15:51; the hiddenness of the mystery from the rulers of this world in 1 Cor. 2:8; and the totality of the mystery in 1 Cor. 15:51, Rom. 11:26, and Rom. 16:26), and especially in Colossians. In Col. 1:16 Paul says of Christ, whom he quickly identifies as the mystery

(1:27): ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς
καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ θεατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε
θεόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε
ἐξουσίαι. τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν
ἐκτίσται.¹²³

The Qumran writings indicate that a theory of angelic domination was current in Jewish circles during the New Testament era. According to 1 QS 3:23, the dominion of the angel of darkness is exercised against the sons of light "according to the mysteries of God until the final period."¹²⁴ (Compare 1 QS 4:18-19). In Eph. 1:9 the mystery of God's will is put into effect in the fulness of time. And in 1 QM the final time arrives when God's mighty intervention brings destruction to Satan and the sons of darkness and wickedness whom he directs in battle (compare "the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience" in Eph. 2:2). Whether or not this Qumran concept of angelic domination

¹²³Ibid., XL, 77-78. On p. 80 Brown also notes that these titles of angelic forces, such as ἀρχαὶ and ἐξουσίαι, are derived from Jewish angelology. Scott, XI, 146, contends that the controversial motive, i.e., to expose the futility of angel worship, evident in Colossians, is absent in Ephesians.

¹²⁴For other Qumran references to time as determined by God's mysterious providence, cf. 1 QS 4:18-19 and 1 QpHab. 7:13.

is the same heresy Paul opposes in Ephesians and Colossians is impossible to determine for certain. However, the fact remains that there are affinities of terminology and thought.¹²⁵

Among other Qumran parallels we might point out 1 QH f. 3:7 which speaks of "the mysteries of God's good pleasure" (compare "the mystery of His will," Eph. 1:9). And while Paul indicates that the ultimate purpose of the revelation of the mystery is for the praise of God's glory (Eph. 1:12,14), the psalmist says in 1 QH 13:13-14: "And Thou hast (appointed) all these things in the mysteries of Thy wisdom to make known Thy glory."

It is evident again that there was ample Semitic background for Paul's use of *μυστήριον* and that "we need not seek a heathen origin for his use of it."¹²⁶

We now turn to the most extended treatment of the Pauline *μυστήριον*, that of Eph. 3, where the term occurs three times (verses 3, 4, and 9). Paul, describing himself as a prisoner of Christ for the Gentiles (compare Col. 1:24-25; 4:3), tells them:

Surely you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation. (I have briefly written about this, and by reading it you may perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ.) In former times it was not made known to men as now it has been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, namely, that the Gentiles have the same heritage, belong to the same body, and share in the same promise in Christ Jesus by means of the gospel of which I became a servant by virtue of the gracious gift of God given to me by the working of His power. To me, the very least of all the saints, this grace

¹²⁵Cf. Brown, XL, 78-79; also Coppens, p. 150.

¹²⁶Robinson, p. 31. On the other hand, for a view similar to Lightfoot's "intentional paradox" contention, cf. Francis Foulkes, The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians in The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

was given to proclaim to the Gentiles the good news of the fathomless riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the working out of the mystery which has been hidden for ages in the God who created all things, in order that now the multi-dimensional wisdom of God might be made known, through the church, to the rulers and the powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He has realized in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Eph. 3:2-11).

The content of the *μυστήριον*¹²⁷ is indicated in v. 6: *εἶναι τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*.¹²⁸ The mystery is that the Gentiles are joint-heirs of an inheritance on which they had no claim by birth, joint-members with the Jews in the Body of Christ, and joint-sharers in covenant promise made in Christ, from which they had once been excluded (compare 2:12). This aspect of the Pauline mystery, although clearly emphasized more in Ephesians, is certainly not "something entirely different" from earlier Pauline usage, as Mitton maintains¹²⁹ (compare Rom. 16:26 and Col. 1:25-27). Also this mystery of the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's plan of salvation and their incorporation into the church with equal standing

edited by R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963) X, 51.

¹²⁷The expression of v. 4, *τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ* appeared also in Col. 4:3.

¹²⁸Note the emphatic position of the infinitive, which is, *epexegetic*. The paronomasia (*συγκληρονόμα, σύσσωμα, συμμέτοχα*), though hard to reproduce [James Moffatt, *The New Testament* (New York: George H. Doran Co., c.1922), p. 292, translates "co-heirs, companions, co-partners"], clearly emphasizes the idea of community of Gentile and Jew in the church.

¹²⁹Mitton, p. 89. For the view that there is here a distinction, not a contradiction, cf. Foulkes, X, 92-93, Coppens, p. 151, and Bornkamm, IV, 820, n.145.

with the Jews is not divorced from the mystery of Eph. 1:9, that of gathering together all things in Christ. Bornkamm comments:

This joining of Jews and Gentiles in one body under the head Christ is a cosmic eschatological event. There takes place in it already the mystery of the comprehending of the whole created world in Christ, in whom the totality receives its head and sum.¹³⁰

Several additional terms and thoughts already familiar from other mystery texts reappear. Twice *οἰκονομία* is used (for the usage in verse 2, compare Col. 1:25 and for that in verse 9, compare 1 Cor. 4:1 and Eph. 1:9). Paul again describes the mystery as once hidden (verse 9) (compare 1 Cor. 2:7 and Col. 1:26), but now revealed (verses 3, 5) (compare 1 Cor. 2:10; Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:26; Eph. 1:9).¹³¹ This revelation once more is a gracious gift (Eph. 2:2,7,8; compare 1 Cor. 2:7; Rom. 16:25; Col. 1:27; Eph. 1:7), and it takes place *ἐν πνεύματι* (Eph. 3:5; compare 1 Cor. 2:10; 14:2; and Eph. 1:13). The Gospel is again closely associated with the mystery (compare Rom. 16:25), in this case, being instrumental (*σχὲν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου*) in bringing about the inclusion of the Gentiles (Eph. 3:6; compare 1:13).

Besides the Semitic parallels to these familiar ideas, parallels we have already cited, we offer the following. In Eph. 3:4 Paul

¹³⁰Ibid., Cf. also Beare, X, 668.

¹³¹Brown's suggestion (cf. XL, 75, n.1) that perhaps the O.T. prophets could be meant in Eph. 3:5, that *ὑμεῖς* could govern the apostles and *ἐν πνεύματι* could refer to the manner of revelation to the O.T. prophets, seems forced. Likewise, Kathryn Sullivan, "The Mystery Revealed to Paul--Eph. 3:1-13," The Bible Today I (1963) 249, asks, "Might there not also be a reference to the Old Testament prophets?" and refers to Sir. 48:25-27.

speaks of his insight (σύνεσις) into the mystery. The Qumran writings also speak of insight into the mysteries (compare 1 QH 11:9,10; 12:20; 1QS 9:18; 11:18).¹³² In Eph. 3:6 the mystery includes the idea that the Gentiles share the same inheritance (συγκληρονομία). In 1 QS 11:8 God's marvelous mysteries, His wisdom, power, and glory, have been given to the Qumran community as an inheritance in the lot of the Holy Ones. Furthermore, Paul says in Eph. 3:9 that the mystery has been hidden for ages in the God who created all things. The thought that eschatological mysteries are already existent in heaven and need only to be revealed is not foreign to apocalyptic writings. En. 103:2 relates mysteries to heavenly tablets. En. 9:6 speaks of eternal secrets preserved in heaven. And in En. 48:6 the Son of Man is said to have been chosen and hidden before God before the creation of the world.¹³³ And finally, the idea that God's mysterious plan was formerly unknown to angelic powers (Eph. 3:10) is not foreign to the Jewish concept of divine mysteries. According to En. 16:3, not all the mysteries had been revealed to the angels before they fell from

¹³²In explaining the construction σύνεσις ἐν instead of a simple objective genitive, Kuhn calls attention to the fact that in Hebrew the verbs of revealing are usually constructed with נ (=*en*). Cf. Karl Georg Kuhn, "The Epistle to the Ephesians in the Light of the Qumran Texts," in Paul and Qumran, edited by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (London: Geoffrey Chapman Ltd., c.1968), p. 118.

¹³³Cf. also En. 62:7. Bornkamm, IV, 816, concludes that mysteries in apocalyptic "are God's counsels destined finally to be disclosed. They are the final events and states which are already truly existent in heaven and may be seen there, and which will in the last days emerge from their concealment and become manifest events."

heaven. God alone knows all the eschatological mysteries and reveals them to few (cf. 2 Bar. 48:2,3; 54:1).¹³⁴

In Eph. 5:32 we come to a unique usage of the Pauline

μυστήριον. It follows immediately the quotation of Gen.

2:24:

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one body." This mystery is of great significance, and I for my part take it to refer to Christ and the church. But, in any case, so far as you are concerned, each one of you must love his wife as himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Eph. 5:31-33).

What is the *μυστήριον* here? While some take it to refer to the institution of marriage itself,¹³⁵ the context seems to support the view that the mystery refers to the Old Testament text.¹³⁶ Brown sums up Paul's line of thought this way:

The text of Gen. that Paul has just quoted fits the argument that he is presenting: a man should love his wife as he loves his own flesh--Why?--because the two are one flesh according to the Scriptures. Now he had already introduced a second simile into his argument: a man should love his wife as Christ loves the Church--Why?--because the Church is Christ's body

¹³⁴Brown, XL, 79. Brown believes that his cosmic, eschatological interpretation of Ephesians 1 greatly clarifies Eph. 3:10. He comments: "The angelic powers see now that their authority is ended and that according to God's plan, all things are subject to Christ. The establishment of the Church, which is the working out of the divine mystery, is the tangible evidence of this." Cf. *ibid.*, XL, 77.

¹³⁵Cf. Robinson, p. 239; Beare, X, 726; Ellicott, p. 139; Brook F. Westcott, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1906), p. 86. Scott, 242-243, also seems to favor this view.

¹³⁶Bornkamm, IV, 823, states: "Since an exhortatory conclusion regarding marital life is drawn from the text and its exposition, *μυστήριον* refers to the text and not to the institution of marriage itself." Cf. also von Soden, XII, 194.

just as a man's wife is his flesh. With this second simile in mind, as Paul quotes Gen., he comments that, besides the obvious meaning, he sees a deeper, hidden meaning in the Gen. passage which refers to the relation between Christ and the Church. However, he does not wish to dwell on this second simile, and so he closes his aside and gets back to the main point.¹³⁷

We understand the mystery here, then, to be a text of Scripture which contains an additional hidden meaning not at first obvious.¹³⁸

This use of *μυστήριον* is unique in Paul's writings,¹³⁹ and, in fact, in the entire New Testament.¹⁴⁰ If it is with the Christological and ecclesiological import of *μυστήριον* in mind that Paul here calls the hidden reference to Christ and the church in the Genesis passage a mystery,¹⁴¹ then this usage, although still unique, is certainly not unrelated to the Pauline concept elsewhere. Bornkamm's caution seems in order:

One should not overlook the link with the other *μυστήριον* verses in Eph. Eph. 5:32 is valid because the eschatological

¹³⁷Brown, XL, 83. Blass and Debrunner, p. 234, indicate that *πλήν* (Eph. 5:33) serves the function of concluding the discussion and emphasizing what is essential.

¹³⁸Bornkamm, IV, 823, puts it this way: "The *μυστήριον* is thus the allegorical meaning of the O.T., saying, its mysteriously concealed prophecy of the relation of Christ to the *ἐκκλησία*."

¹³⁹It is precisely because of the uniqueness of this usage of *μυστήριον* that Ellicott, p. 139, rejects the interpretation that the term here refers to the Scriptural text.

¹⁴⁰Edwin Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), p. 61, feels, on the other hand, that there is similar usage in Rev. 1:20 and 17:7. However, as Brown notes, XL, 83, n. 3, there the mystery has to do with strange symbolic visions which have no meaning beyond what they symbolize, while in Eph. 5:32 it refers to a relatively clear Scripture passage which has additional meaning.

¹⁴¹This seems to me to be a strong probability, although the possibility that the term may be used of any deeper meaning of an O.T. passage, must be recognized. Cf. Brown, XL, 83-84.

mystery of Christ and the Church is mysteriously pre-figured in Gn. 2:21. The interpretation introduced by ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω is in express opposition to other interpretations which also find a *μυστήριον* in the text but differ from Eph. in exposition.¹⁴²

Although we can find no exact parallel in the Jewish background to this use of *μυστήριον*, yet this use of the term seemingly would not have been foreign to the Semitic view of mystery. The Jews believed that deep and hidden meaning could be found in Old Testament passages. Philo, for example, allegorized a good deal in order to derive the mysteries hidden in Scripture. And in 1 QpHab. 7:1-5 the belief is expressed that mysteries underlie the words of Old Testament prophets, the meaning of which God reveals to the Teacher of Righteousness.¹⁴³

Finally, we turn to one more appearance of *μυστήριον* in Ephesians, this one in 6:19. Paul urges his fellow Christians to pray "for me, that I might be given a message when I open my mouth,¹⁴⁴ and might freely and boldly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. . . ." (6:19,20). Note the close resemblance to Col. 4:3.¹⁴⁵ Here in Eph. 6:19 instead

¹⁴²Bornkamm, IV, 823.

¹⁴³However, Brown, XL, 84, calls attention to the fact that "the Qumran search for such mysteries in a line by line peser of the prophets, adapting every line to its own situation, is not at all the same as Paul's exegesis."

¹⁴⁴Although Abbott, p. 189, insists that ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματος μου be taken to mean "the opening of the mouth by God" rather than "when I open my mouth," we agree with Westcott, p. 98, that in either case the phrase marks some weighty, solemn deliverance.

¹⁴⁵Supra, p. 106.

of τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ we have τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,¹⁴⁶ an expression that occurs only here.¹⁴⁷ Actually the two phrases, τοῦ Χριστοῦ and τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, are something like two sides of the same "mystery-coin." For it is the gospel that proclaims the mystery which is salvation for all in Christ.¹⁴⁸ Again, we note how Paul, far from enjoining secrecy with respect to the mystery, urgently seeks to proclaim it freely and boldly--an emphasis much more akin to the Semitic usage of mystery than that of the mystery cults.

We now turn to two final occurrences of μυστήριον in Paul's letters, both in 1 Timothy 3. In mentioning qualifications of the deacons, Paul says in verse 9 that they should "hold the mystery of the faith (τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως)

¹⁴⁶Some authorities, including p⁴⁶, omit τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. However, the preponderant evidence seems to favor the text. τοῦ εὐαγγελίου is probably subjective genitive, i.e., "the gospel which announces the mystery." Cf. Brown, XL, 82, n. 1, and Ellicott, p. 158. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Pickering and Inglis LTD, 1961), p. 133, simply says that "the mystery is the gospel." At least, in a way the gospel is interchangeable with the mystery. For "the mystery in itself signifies the hidden nature of the divine plan; the gospel is the external manifestation of that plan to the people affected by it." Cf. Brown, XL, 82, n. 2. Cerfaux, p. 403, likewise comments: "As far as its content is concerned the mystery is no different from the gospel; the gospel is made known (γνωρίζεσθαι) as the mystery is made known; we have a share in the gospel (Eph. 3:6) as we have a share in the mystery (Col. 1:27). . . . The same Christ or the same salvation through Christ is preached--it is the good news, and at the same time it is the mystery if one considers the profound wisdom of the divine plan which is shown to us."

¹⁴⁷Yet not a surprising expression. Cf. Rom. 16:25 where κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον parallels κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν μυστήριον.

¹⁴⁸Brown, XL, 82.

with a clear conscience." A little later the apostle tells Timothy that he was writing this so that he (Timothy) would know how one should conduct himself in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. Then Paul adds:

And without question great is the mystery of our religion (τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον):

He who was manifested in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the spirit,
Was seen by angels,
Was proclaimed among the Gentiles,
Was believed in throughout the world,
Was taken up in glory (3:16).

The context (1:3-7; 4:1-10), which indicates that one of Paul's concerns is that Timothy and all servants in the church hold to sound teaching in the face of those who teach false doctrines, seems to suggest, according to Brown,¹⁴⁹ that τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως refers to "the doctrinal content of faith"¹⁵⁰ and τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον¹⁵¹ to "the object of religious

¹⁴⁹Ibid., XL, 85.

¹⁵⁰Brown then takes "faith" subjectively, as does A. R. C. Leaney, The Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon (London: SCM Press LTD, c. 1960), p. 57, who says, "The Christian mystery is the revelation of God in Christ open only to the eye of faith. . . ." So also Charles J. Ellicott, A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (London: Parker, Son, and Bourn, West Strand, 1861), p. 46, who takes πίστεως as a pure possessive genitive. On the other hand, some maintain that πίστις here is objective, i.e., the Christian faith regarded as an objective body of teaching (cf. 4:1,6; 5:8; 6:10). Cf. John N. D. Kelly, A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (London: Adam and Charles Black, c. 1963), p. 82, and Burton S. Easton, The Pastoral Epistles (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), p. 132.

¹⁵¹Walter Lock, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, in The International Critical Commentary, edited by S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 44, believes that this "phrase is perhaps a deliberate contrast to τὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἀνομίας" (2 Thess. 2:7), but there is no evidence for this at all. Cf. supra, p. 26.

adherence." It might be, however, that Paul's use of *μυστήριον* here in 1 Timothy 3 is completely formal and that *τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως* means simply "faith" and *τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον* simply "religion."¹⁵² Bornkamm remarks:

The transition from the hidden event to its proclamation in the term explains the formal use in I Tim. 3:9: *τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως*, and 3:16: *τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον*. In the first case it simply means *πίστις* and in the second *εὐσέβεια*, but the phrase derives its point from the reference to the eschatological manifestation of Christ, as may be seen from the quasi-confessional hymn in 3:16.¹⁵³

Some conclude from this formal use of *μυστήριον* that the term here "has lost the characteristically Pauline sense, and either denotes what transcends ordinary comprehension or has become a mere piece of heavy theological jargon."¹⁵⁴ The context, however, clearly negates this assumption. Robinson, for example, points out that *τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως* (3:9) cannot refer to some deep, secret doctrine that can only be understood by the spiritually elite:

¹⁵²Arndt and Gingrich, p. 532, maintain that 1 Timothy uses *μυστήριον* as a formula.

¹⁵³Bornkamm, IV, 822. Cf. also von Soden, XII, pp. 194-195.

¹⁵⁴Cf. Kelly, p. 82, who notes that it is especially those who question the authenticity of the Pastorals who contend that the usage here is out of character with the Pauline mystery. E. F. Scott, The Pastoral Epistles, in The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.) XII, 36, holds that this pastoral mystery "becomes almost conventional; it is assumed that although men cannot understand the gospel they must accept it with implicit faith as given by God." Likewise, Fred D. Gealy, The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus, in The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), XI, 417, suggests that mystery here "has become merely a technical term, suggesting not that the Christian faith is a revelation to be marvelled at, but that it is a body of revealed doctrine to be accepted unfeignedly. . . ."

It is not required of him (a deacon), as of the bishop, that he should be *ἐκδιδάσκων*. Hence no secret lore can be meant: he is not the depository of a secret tradition, as the words might have seemed to imply had they been spoken of the bishop. The phrase in its context can only refer to such elementary and fundamental knowledge as any servant of the Church must necessarily have.¹⁵⁵

But it is especially the Christological hymn (3:16),¹⁵⁶ which brilliantly illuminates the content of *τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον*, that shows just how characteristically Pauline this mystery is.¹⁵⁷ The mystery is nothing less than Christ Himself

¹⁵⁵Robinson, p. 239. Robinson also notes that the epithet "great" which is applied to "the mystery of our religion" (3:16), as in Eph. 5:32, refers to the importance, not to the obscurity of the mystery.

¹⁵⁶Lock, pp. 44-45, believes that it is more probable that this is a quotation rather than the writer's own words, because of the introductory *ὁμολογουμένως* (contrast Eph. 5:32) and the rhythmical form of the diction, as well as for less compelling reasons. The antithetical parallelism and the deliberate assonance of the six third person singular passive aorist verbs also seem to indicate this is indeed from an early Christian hymn. The apparently fragmentary nature of the quotation--a complex relative clause without a principal clause--has resulted in attempts to emend the text so as to produce a smooth-flowing sentence. Thus Western witnesses (061 D* lat) have *δ* for *ὅς* and thus link the clause with *μυστήριον*. A number of later MSS. (A²P²W²pl) read *θεός*, likewise possibly an attempt to remove the superficial disjointedness of the text, or perhaps a natural corruption (*θC*, contracted in uncials) of *OC*. On the other hand, the text (*ὅς*) has the best MSS. support (A¹A²G), and, as the hardest reading, is to be preferred.

¹⁵⁷Coppens, p. 155, n. 58, states: "The mystery is described in 1 Timothy 3:16 in such a way as to resume the principle aspects that the Pauline literature has revealed to us."

(compare Col. 1:27; 2:2).¹⁵⁸ It is the incarnate Christ¹⁵⁹ (ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί) (compare references to the putting into effect of God's eternal redemptive plan in Christ--Eph. 1:10; 3:9,11). The second strophe, ἐσκαδύθη ἐν πνεύματι, fails to recall any specific aspect of the Pauline mystery elsewhere, although it certainly is not contrary to Paul's view of Christ (compare Rom. 1:4).¹⁶⁰ But that Christ was seen by angels (ὡφθη ἀγγέλοις) is not too far from Paul's thought in Eph. 3:10 where the mystery, once hidden, now has been made known to angelic powers.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, this mystery of Christ has been proclaimed among the Gentiles (ἐκνεύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν),¹⁶² an emphasis that we have observed several

¹⁵⁸Cf. Ibid., p. 44. Also Kelly, pp. 89-90. von Soden, XII, 195, says: "Aus ihm ergibt sich Christus als der Inhalt des *μυστήριου*."

¹⁵⁹H. Armin Moellering, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, in the Concordia Commentary, edited by Walter J. Bartling and Albert E. Glock (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1970), p. 80, contends that the theme of this hymn is the incarnation.

¹⁶⁰For various interpretations of the meaning of this phrase, cf. Kelly, pp. 90-91; Moellering, pp. 79-80; Lock, pp. 45-46; Gealy, XI, 423; C. K. Barrett, The Pastoral Epistles (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 65; and Cerfaux, pp. 372-373.

¹⁶¹Cf. supra, p. 114. For other illuminating parallels, cf. Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 2:15; 1 Peter 3:22; and Heb. 1:6. Cerfaux, pp. 373-374, cites what he believes is an even closer parallel, which links the manifestation to the angels and the preaching to the Gentiles, namely, the Ascension of Isaiah 11:22-26: "And when he sent his twelve disciples and he went up, I beheld. I beheld him, and he was in the vault of heaven. He had not taken on their form, but all the angels of the firmament and Satan saw him and adored. And there was great sadness and they said: How is it that the Lord has come down upon us and we have not recognized the glory (which clothed him). . .?" Cf. 1 Cor. 2:6-8.

¹⁶²Although ἔθνη could mean simply "nations," i.e., mankind, we prefer the rendering "Gentiles." Perhaps there is an allusion to the work of Paul (cf. 1 Tim. 2:7, where Paul describes himself as a κηρύξ . . . ἐσκαδύθη ἐν πνεύματι). . .

times (compare Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:6-9). And this mystery of Christ has been believed in throughout the world ($\epsilon\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\upsilon\theta\eta$ $\epsilon\nu$ $\kappa\acute{o}\sigma\mu\eta$) (compare Rom. 16:26, where the mystery is made known to all the Gentiles to bring them to the obedience of faith).¹⁶³ Finally, Christ is taken up in glory ($\alpha\nu\epsilon\lambda\acute{\eta}\mu\phi\theta\eta$ $\epsilon\nu$ $\delta\acute{o}\xi\eta$) in which He remains and which He communicates to men (compare Eph. 1:10,12,14; Col. 1:27; 1 Cor. 2:7).

Brown concludes: "Thus the mystery of religion, as unfolded in six parallel statements, sums up admirably all the aspects of the Pauline mysterion already seen in the other epistles."¹⁶⁴ There are, at any rate, many aspects of the Pauline $\mu\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\rho\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu$ captured here in 1 Tim. 3:16. And certainly the eschatological character of this mystery,¹⁶⁵ its culmination in the historical Christ, its universal revelation, and its relation to the spiritual life¹⁶⁶ all seem clearly more akin to the Semitic background of mystery than to mystery concepts of the mystery religions.

¹⁶³It is interesting to note that in Col. 1:6,23 it is the Gospel that is proclaimed in all the world and bears fruit throughout the world. The Gospel and the mystery are closely associated by Paul in Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:6-10; and Eph. 6:19.

¹⁶⁴Brown, XL, 86. Brown also suggests that it is the idea of the church that brings on Paul's exclamation of the greatness of the mystery (3:16) and that this very church "in Pauline thought is the tangible evidence of the realization of the mystery: the union of Jews and Gentiles in Christ's body." Cf. Eph. 3:6,10.

¹⁶⁵von Soden, XII, 195, not only points to the hymn in 3:16 but also to the $\psi\alpha\lambda\mu\omicron\varsigma$ $\kappa\alpha\iota\epsilon\omicron\iota$ of 4:1.

¹⁶⁶Note that in 1 Tim. 3:9 the mystery of faith is to be kept $\epsilon\nu$ $\kappa\alpha\theta\alpha\rho\epsilon\tau\eta$ $\sigma\upsilon\nu\epsilon\kappa\delta\acute{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\iota$ (cf. 1:5,19). And in 3:16 $\epsilon\vartheta\epsilon\tau\epsilon$ $\beta\epsilon\kappa\alpha$, in view of the immediate context, as well as its use in 2:2 and 4:7,8 (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12), seems to stress the aspect of piety or godliness. Cf. Lock, p. 44. Also Alfred Plummer, The

In addition, the vocabulary of 1 Tim. 3:9,16 may find some parallels in Semitic literature. For example, Paul's exclamation of the greatness of the mystery (3:16) recalls "the marvellous mysteries of God," a phrase frequently found in the Qumran writings. And Sir. 43:32 speaks of "many mysteries greater than these." Finally, Brown calls attention to a possible parallel to "the mystery of faith" (3:9) and "the mystery of religion" (3:16) in En. 58:5 where "the heritage of faith" is in apposition to "the secrets of righteousness."¹⁶⁷

Pastoral Epistles (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1900), p. 133; Moellering, p. 79; and Scott, XII, 40.

¹⁶⁷Brown, XL, 86.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE PAULINE MYSTERION

We are now ready to summarize the findings of our study in the origin of the Pauline use of *μυστήριον*. In considering the contention that the source of Paul's use of *μυστήριον* is Hellenistic, borrowed probably from the mystery cults, we discovered that there are definitive differences between mystery cult concepts and the Christian mystery¹ and that the linguistic evidence, far from supporting a free-wheeling borrowing of terminology from the mystery religions, points toward an almost deliberate avoidance of such terms.² Furthermore, we noted that Paul's own thoroughly Jewish training and orientation makes it highly improbable that he got his mystery vocabulary or thought from Hellenistic sources.³

Next we investigated the Semitic background of *μυστήριον* and found that the concept of *μυστήριον* was quite popular in Jewish writings (the LXX, especially Daniel 2;⁴ the Pseudepigrapha;⁵

¹Supra, pp. 21-26.

²Supra, pp. 26-27.

³Supra, pp. 18-19. G. Bornkamm, "*μυστήριον, μνέω*," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, translated and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c.1967), IV, 824, concludes that the N. T. *μυστήριον* "betrays no relation to the mystery cults. . . . In spite of certain analogies, there are thus serious objections against bringing Jesus or Paul under the category of the mystagogue."

⁴Supra, pp. 37-47.

⁵Supra, pp. 48-55.

and the Qumran literature⁶) and had a considerable variety of meaning. Certainly there seems to be sufficient raw material here, particularly in the later Jewish apocalyptic, from which Paul could have derived his various usages of *μυστήριον*.

Then we focused attention on the extra-Pauline occurrences of *μυστήριον* in the New Testament (the Synoptics and the Apocalypse).⁷ There we saw that there are numerous thought and language parallels in Semitic writings to these New Testament mystery texts.

Finally, in an examination of the twenty-one occurrences of *μυστήριον* in Paul's own writings we discovered that his varied use of the term likewise finds frequent parallels, both verbal and conceptual, to the term in Semitic writings.⁸

We agree with Brown, then, when he concludes:

We believe it no exaggeration to say that, considering the variety and currency of the concept of divine mysteries in Jewish thought, Paul and the N.T. writers could have written everything they did about mysterion if there had never been pagan mystery religions. "Mystery" was a part of the native theological equipment of the Jews who came to Christ.⁹

Without claiming to have found the exact source of any specific usage of *μυστήριον* in Paul's writings, we do believe that the origin of the Pauline *μυστήριον* most probably is to be found in Semitic thought, especially Daniel and other apocalyptic

⁶Supra, pp. 48-55.

⁷Supra, pp. 67-74.

⁸Supra, pp. 75-124.

⁹Raymond E. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (II)," Biblica, XL (January 1959), 87.

literature, as well as the Qumran writings. At the same time we are not unaware that God's own creative, inspiring Spirit accounts for the full significance this concept has in Paul's writings.¹⁰

¹¹Cf. James S. Stewart, A Man In Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.) p. 75, who suggests that viewing Paul as a mere borrower from his environment fails to give the Holy Spirit, who is always a creative Spirit, His due. Similarly, Joachim Jeremias, "The Key to Pauline Theology," The Expository Times, LXXVI (Oct. 1964-Sept. 1965), 27-30, contends that the key to Pauline theology is not Tarsus (Hellenistic influence) nor Jerusalem (Jewish influence) but Damascus (his conversion experience).

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